MODERN POETRY VS. THE COMMON READER . . By Robert Hillyer

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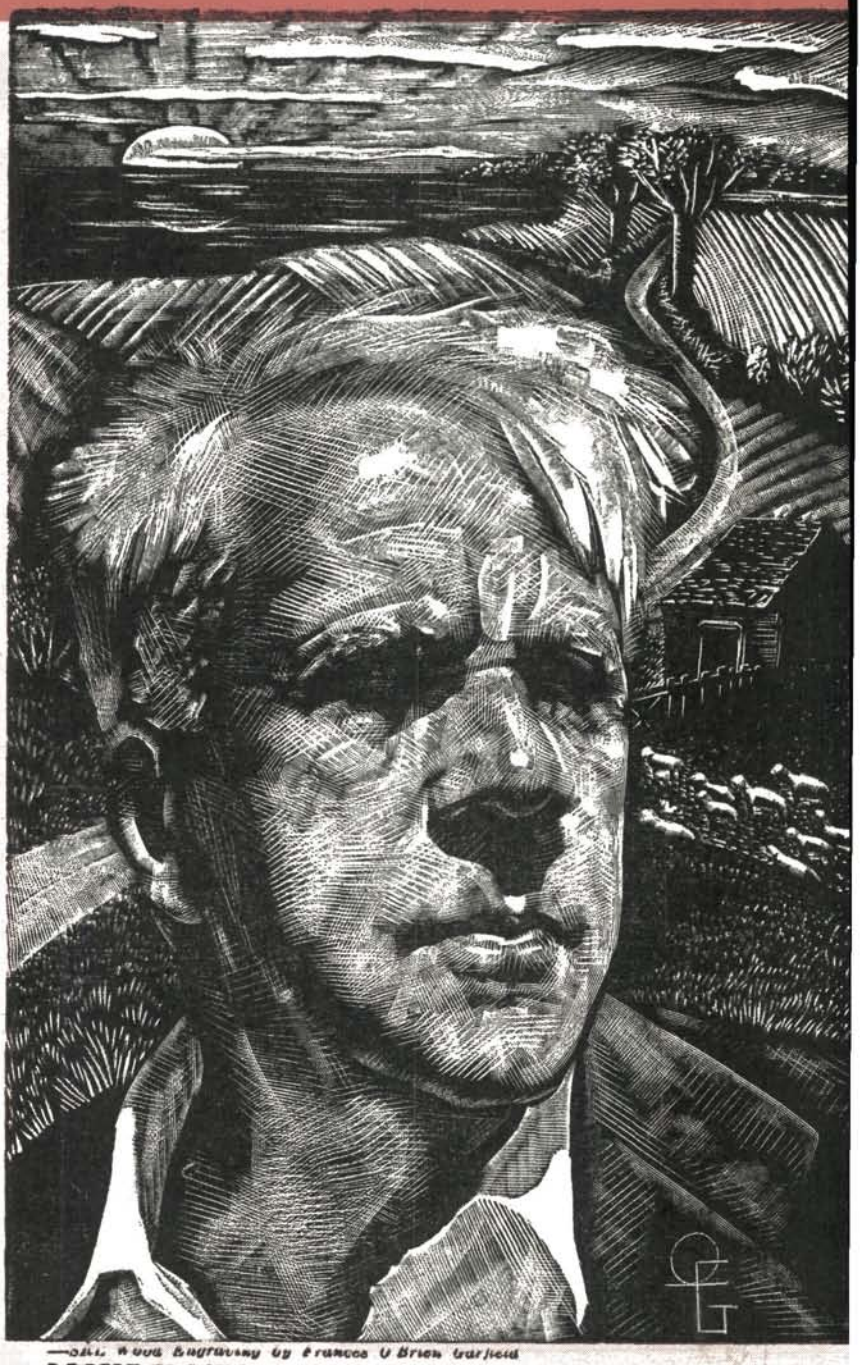

—Still Woods Englishing by Frances O'Brien Garfield

ROBERT FROST "is not only a very wonderful poet but a very wise man." (See page 24)

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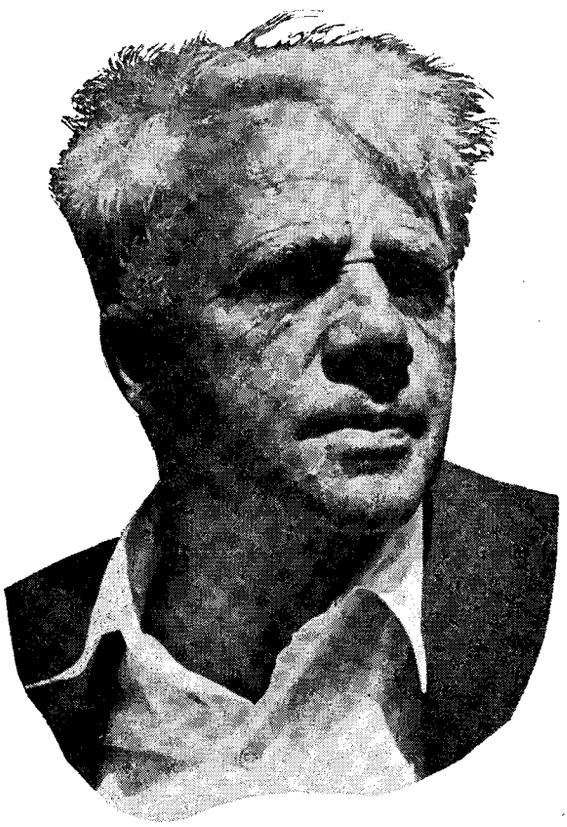

A Masque of Reason

by ROBERT FROST

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EVERY once in a very long time indeed, the publishing business turns into the wonderful, exciting thing that you dream of its being. Such a moment happened to us last August, when we were up at Breadloaf, Vermont, where a lot of writers and apprentices go to attend the annual summer Conference. Robert Frost was there, as usual, and one day he invited a few of his friends to the cabin in the mountain meadow down the road where he lives and works. Such an invitation is not common. We went, wondering what he wanted to talk about.

But it was not for talk that he had asked us, though there are few things better in this world than Robert Frost's conversation. Instead, he pulled from his desk the battered notebook into which he transcribes his rough-draft poems, and in which he does a good deal of his polishing. Opening it on his knee, he began to read, in that slow, rich, wise New England voice:

A MASQUE OF REASON

A fair oasis in the purest desert.
A man sits leaning back against a palm.
His wife lies by him looking at the sky.

Man You're not asleep?

Wife No, I can hear you. Why?

Man I said the incense tree's on fire again.

We listened, feeling ourselves gathered deeper and deeper into the heart of a poem which was like no other Frost poem that had gone before it except in the richness of its fashioning, the craft of its structure. As the reader continued, the room began to lose the stillness in which we had all begun to listen. It was impossible to remain wholly silent in the presence of this poem. The noise we made was not laughter, but the lower, deeper sound of chuckles which come from ripe wit deftly spoken and the deep savor of delight. And when the reading was finished, the five or six of us all began to talk at once.

What each of us was trying to say in his or her own way was that the poem was wonderful, that it existed on all sorts of levels at once—the level of pure pleasure as poetry, the level of wit and irony, and underneath them all, an ancient wisdom at once sobering and gay.

Seven months later we are publishing that poem, on March 26th, 1945—the day on which Robert Frost is celebrating his seventieth birthday. It is almost inconceivable, if you know him, that the man can be seventy, anyhow. Certainly the only evidence of age in A MASQUE OF REASON is its profound wisdom and its profound humanity. At seventy, Robert Frost seems to us to be publishing one of his major works, a poem which is certain to be read and discussed and relished for years and decades to come. It is good to think that an experience like that of ours last August can be shared as widely and rediscovered as often as we are confident it will be. Its publication is, technically, a literary event. Practically, we think its publication is more on the order of a human experience, and one that we are pleased to be transmitting.

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The Saturday Review of Literature

Modern Poetry vs. the Common Reader

Too Many Poets Are Living in a Metaphorical Age

ROBERT HILLYER

IN the common reader's opinion all modern poetry is obscure. By common reader I do not mean the one who renders to newspaper verse the tribute of a genteel tear; I mean an intelligent reader, not a specialist in poetry, who would, however, read it if he could understand it: the kind of audience that made Shakespeare, Pope, Byron, and Tennyson best sellers. He opens a modern anthology and reads

That fish-shaped train, green-headed,
Cuts at the rim of distance, which increases:
Still it ingests, the scene it punishes,
Its passage beats the progress of a rose
That's comely eaten and all blown and dark. . . .[1]

He flips over the pages.

Look into your heart, you will find a County Sligo,
A bevel hill with for navel a cairn of stones,
You will find a shadow and sheen of a moleskin mountain
And a litter of chronicles and bones.[2]

He examines himself in the light of this metaphor, and decides that it has no application, at least to him. Being a conscientious reader, however, he recalls Coleridge's injunction to approach poetry with a willing suspension of disbelief. Could this be a case in point? Could this be what Coleridge was thinking of? He decides to be fair.

That apple was mental, a constellation of ideas.

Can a real thing, invisible, be coloration of
Mental, and inaudible a sound of congruent harpers harping?[3]

No, certainly, this was not what Coleridge was thinking of. The common reader puts down the volume.

Thus, any contemporary poetry is suspected of obscurity. So many poets, notably the large proportion who have come under the influence of Eliot and the new metaphysicals or Crane and the new esthetes, have shrunk intelligibility to the vanishing point. On analysis, MacLeish's "A poem should not mean but be," so often, so admiringly quoted, is non-sense. It is a fashionable thing to say, however, at a time when *meaning* (which is, in critical fact, the true *being* of a poem) is so laboriously evaded.

A. E. Housman is the only recent poet not under suspicion. For the rest, the common reader is so trained to be puzzled that he will rack his brain over one of Frost's simplest aphorisms or look for a hidden meaning in Masefield. He has an instinctive defense against modern poets because so many of them have lowered a veil between him and the cryptic art. I may cite a personal experience. Two or three years ago a poem of mine appeared in which the first line ran: "Arcadia means the land of bears." That simple statement is the clearest anyone could write; it is, in fact, taken straight over from the dictionary. Yet no line I have published has elicited so many requests for explanation. Arcadia *does* mean the land of bears, and that is all there is to it. If the common reader will trust me, he need not know Greek to understand the sentence. But he will not trust me. He has developed the will not to understand.

A. E. Housman "is the only recent poet not under suspicion."

IT has been pointed out, notably in Max Eastman's essay on "poets talking to themselves," that obscurity lies in the fashion of wrapping the meaning in purely personal references from the poet's reading, his emotional reactions to certain objects, or his opinions. Unless one has access to the poet's library or his reminiscences, identification of his purpose is difficult if not impossible. I shall never forget the solemnity of a group of young critics in the Poetry Room at Harvard, who were discussing and interpreting, phrase by phrase, a rather pompous work of discreet réclame. Like the Chinese critics of the classics, they were in complete disharmony in their findings. Listening to their commentary, their gloss, I wondered if the new metaphysicals are not setting up a critical jargon farther removed from naturalness than the old and discarded clichés of "poetic diction": if our poets were not, in fact—again as in Chinese poetry—setting up a literary language so far from the common reader that only scholars could deal with it, and even then in disagreement and with reference libraries at their backs. However, this aspect of the question of obscurity has been considered.

Figurative language as a source of obscurity has not been so thoroughly considered, because the notions concerning it are so hazy. I believe that most young poets think that a metaphor is always "stronger" than a simile, and thus must always be preferred. But the gap between similes and metaphors is much greater than they seem aware of. A simile is really an expanded adjective. It does not bind the object to any one quality;

(Author's note: The citations are all from a standard yearly anthology of modern poetry. They are admittedly chosen as extreme examples of current tendencies.)

[1] "Sub-Continent Journey," by Jean Garrique. "The Book of New Poems." Edited by Oscar Williams. 1944.
[2] "Neutrality," by Louis MacNeice. Ibid.
[3] "That Apple Was Mental," by Marguerite Young. Ibid.

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it merely modifies it. Hence, it can be changed in an instant without confusion. We can, as Wordsworth noted, play with similes. Burns's Love in the first line of his lyric is like a red, red rose; in the third, she is like a melody. These qualifications are adjectival: she is rose-like, she is melody-like. There is no clash, for she can be like both. But a metaphor would identify her, at least for the space of one stanza, as either a rose or a melody; otherwise, we should notice the mixed metaphor. A simile is a suggestion, a metaphor matches the object quality by quality, and usually provides a picture appropriate in all its parts to the object. If I say a woman is a kangaroo, I transform her for an instant into the animal, pounce and pouch, with definiteness and, in this case, some spite. If I say she is like a kangaroo, I am good-naturedly pointing out one quality—that she is always on the go.

IT is obvious that the succession of mixed metaphors in the following passage should be similes, theoretically, even if, practically, they should be blank paper:

Out of what calms and pools the cool shell grows
dumb teeth under clear waters, where no currents
fracture the coral's porous horn

Grows up the mind's stone tree, the honeycomb,
the plump brain coral breaking the pool's mirror,
the ebony antler, the cold sugared fan.[4]

It is not necessary to go on, because that is the way it does go on.

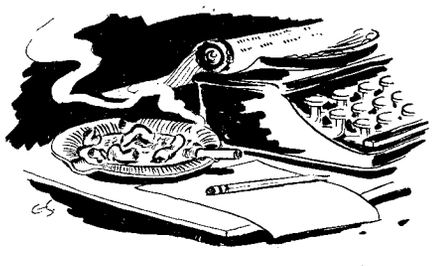
Santayana speaks of metaphor as a definition. In the desire to be exact and definite (sound practice, in general), a modern poet often uses metaphor where simile would be quite enough. Taking the strong pictorial nature of the metaphor into account, this preference results not only in obscurity but often in ludicrous effects. Consider the following lines as a definition, "In Defence of Humanism":

The face of the precipice is black with lovers;
The sun above them is a bag of nails; the spring's
First rivers hide among their hair.
Goliath plunges his hand into the poisoned well
And bows his head and feels my feet walk through his brain.[5]

Simile is especially appropriate in poems of mood (a preponderance of modern verse) wherein mood is, as the time-tables say, "subject to change without notice." It leaves one free. But a metaphor binds the adjacent context to its own reference. If I say that Love *is* a melody, then the context, especially the adjectives, will have to be applicable to music. And if I say that the sun is a bag of nails—but perhaps I would not say that.

The metaphor moves toward the symbol,—it is an incompleted symbol—and is, again, often used where symbolism would be more appropriate. It is not my purpose to dwell on the elaborate subject of symbolism. It is sufficient to point out that a symbol is a substitution, an embodiment of one thing or idea in another because of some association—pictorial, historical, or traditional. Almost always a specific object or familiar piece of knowledge is employed as a substitute for an abstraction or large philosophical concept which, fully developed, would make impossible the intense condensation necessary to poetry. Yeats's lyric, "Sailing to Byzantium," is a case in point. The key to the symbolism lies in the conventions of Byzantine art, with which anyone can acquaint himself by a glance into the encyclopaedia (if he does not know it already). Byzantine art subordinates—even distorts—natural things and gestures to a larger pattern: in other words, all motion and change are rectified in accordance with a fixed composition which, in the mind of the artist, seems the everlasting order. The Heracleitean flux is, as it were, arrested and shaped to the geometry of the eternal. "Sailing to Byzantium" thus becomes the expression of a mystical goal Oriental in origin. The Eternal Now, wherein past, present, and future are fixed beyond the flickering illusions of Time, is, according to this poem, the proper realm for an aging man whose body is tattered by the agitations of life, and whose spirit is clapping its wings in anticipation of its flight from the alone to the Alone.

A symbol should be continuously and consistently applicable through a single work. Once the poet has made the substitution of the specific for the abstract he holds to it. But this treatment cannot be accorded to a metaphor. If a metaphor is more pictorial, more committal than a simile, it is less so than a symbol. Thus, in using metaphors where symbols would be yet stronger, modern writers strain their effects, and in extending the metaphor beyond its appointed length, create a *conceit,* as did the metaphysicals old and new. For example: "my love is a bird." There is the metaphor, sound though trite. Treat it as a symbol and soon the bird-song will have to be accounted for as the speech of love, the wings as the flights of love. So far so good. But what to do with the feathers? the beak? and the claws? Obviously, there cannot be complete substitution without absurdity.



It would take more than big letters and personifications to make sense out of these symbols poured helter-skelter into metaphorical limits:

And still the venery of Capital
Freezes the Puritan virtues into gold,
While Mars, pinched healer, taps their veins. I am cold,

War's coddling will not warm me up again.
Brazenly gracious Ares throws his arms
About his wet-mother the mulct'd tycoon
(The pageantry understanding forms
Anonymous machinery from raw men,
Riding the whirlwind, it directs the drums):
I bawl for Santa Claus and Hamilton . . . etc.[6]

We say that a simile modifies something, a metaphor defines it, and a symbol takes the place of it. Whence comes this over-emphasis on the method of definition, which, however, fails to define but on the contrary confuses the material beyond comprehension? The answer is twofold, stylistic and philosophical.

IN the first place, the insistence on the sensuous image as opposed to the abstract idea, which began in France and spread into English through the imagist school, resulted in a picture-poetry wherein the picture frequently was everything. It existed without reference to general human experience. This was the first step in the fallacious separation of *being* from *meaning.* In American poetry, we already had, too, the tradition of catalogue, as exemplified in the work of Walt Whitman. In such a poem as Carl Sandburg's on Chicago, the influence of the catalogue was plain. Amy Lowell's "Lilacs" was an early example of the catalogue combined with the imagist technique. It was successful because all the images were carefully selected characteristics of the New England scene,—they all had a single focus. At the same time, we had the gradual infusion of dream images from Freudian psychology, as in the early poems of Conrad Aiken. Then, with increasing pressure, came the learned reference in the work of Eliot. It is interesting to note that at first this influential poet used his references to depict confusion and frustration as in "The Hollow Men" and "The Waste Land." After that, Eliot suddenly defined him-

[4] "The Atoll in the Mind," by Alex Comfort. "The Book of New Poems." Edited by Oscar Williams. 1943.
[5] "In Defence of Humanism," by David Gascoyne. Ibid.
[6] "The Capitalist's Meditation by the Civil War Monument, Christmas, 1942," by Robert Lowell. Ibid.

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self. He became a triple metaphor: Royalist, Anglo-Catholic, and Classicist.

The contemporary poets, themselves in a welter of confusion and frustration, picked up the qualities of Eliot's earlier method and advanced far beyond it, as a final stylistic force entered the scene. In reaction against the looseness of free verse, the poets writing today are hair-splittingly conscious of the subtleties of language, of the single word. The same impulse crops up in Basic English, in the puns and onomatopoeia of James Joyce, in the oblique approach of the stream-of-consciousness. Everywhere, under such a development, the result is the same: a flight from clarity.

On the philosophical side the situation is appropriate to stylistic chaos. The violent swing to materialism crashed into the stone wall of the present war. The pendulum rebounds, half-shattered and unbalanced. There is no spiritual asylum, although there are already signs that people are searching for it. The best proof of the existence of God is the state of the world that has discarded him. But it is easier to dethrone him than to find him again. The mind of the present is like a beleaguered city, milling with undirected traffic and thick with refugees on whom the bombs pour. Everywhere, there is need of definition. To an age lapped in Lydian airs, the sweetness of the well-tempered simile is natural music; to a sturdy religion or philosophy, unperturbed by the chaos without, symbolism condenses the high revelations of faith to form a spire toward the sun. There is neither simile nor symbol for us; for us there is one necessity: definition. But of what?

Much modern poetry is as unreadable as the page of history in which it is written. Never before in literature has poetry been so at the mercy of the prevailing mood of the times. Metaphor after metaphor, the individual writer is thrown back on his own disgust with himself and his world. What the Dadaists triflingly sought in the languors of a doubtful peace, the modernists accomplish in the frenzy of war. But they cannot continue. Their confusion is a sign of artistic effeminacy and egotism. What follows is to be an age for heroes in the arts as elsewhere. And their language will be simple and melodious in the ears of the common reader, the common man, for he is one of them.

Robert Hillyer, recently Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard, the chair formerly occupied by Dean Briggs and Professor Copeland, is the author of some twenty books, most of them of poetry. He is now devoting his entire time to writing. He is a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

Colonel Wood: "Grand Old Rebel"

Poet of Nature and Economic Bondage

SARA BARD FIELD

WHEN the popular book, "Life Begins at Forty," appeared, Charles Erskine Scott Wood remarked: "Why forty? Mine began at sixty."

He was nearing sixty when circumstances permitted him to give all, rather than fractions of himself and his time, to writing. His remark placed his own discriminating emphasis on the occupation which, after brilliant careers in the military and legal professions, he knew to be his true, hence his most satisfying, self-expression.

It was, however, no leap into the unknown he made when he turned from writing his last legal brief to the completion of "The Poet in the Desert," and of "Heavenly Discourse" (satires which last year, seventeen years after publication, went into their twenty-fifth printing). Whether he was exploring Alaska, engaging in Indian campaigns, carrying important secret documents from General O. O. Howard to President Hayes, or, later, engaged in brilliant legal battles which gave him place with the foremost Admiralty lawyers on the Pacific Coast, he was always writing something. There is a file of early, racy ballads about the Indian wars, some of which he composed on horseback when a young lieutenant in the field. There were, later, vigorous verses sent to *The Public,* a forthright liberal magazine published in Chicago by Louis Post, verses which elicited hearty commendation from Mark Twain with whom he had a robust friendship. His "Indian Tales," later published by the Vanguard Press, were early collected into a charming volume printed by his young son and a friend on their "attic press." This and a three-years' later private printing of his "Masque of Love" are now collector's items.

—*SRL drawing by Frances O'Brien Garfield.*
Charles Erskine Scott Wood

Indeed, as one surveys the life of this poet and many-sided prose writer one sees that writing was a necessity to him. His other professions gave him a living. Writing gave him life. This *aqua vitae* bubbled up between any and every conceivable crack in his other imperative preoccupations. There is no more convincing evidence of the truth that one finds time for the fundamentally necessary work in spite of all obstacles, than the record of Colonel Wood's writing during years of his greatest activity in legal and social fields. With the support of a large family, a crowded daily docket, exhausting hours in court where he argued his case "with leonine passion if a principle was involved," with a participating interest in all liberal movements and legislation, he also found time for his many unique contributions to *The Pacific Monthly.*

The Pacific Monthly was launched in Portland, Oregon, in 1899 with the hope it might become to the Pacific Coast what *The Atlantic Monthly* was to the Eastern shore. Between the date of its first issue and 1903 Colonel Wood contributed many articles covering a wide range of subjects. Because of the hungry reception given these educative articles, he was urged to undertake a monthly contribution of comment on current events. Always eager to spread his cultural and liberal ideas, he agreed to do this. From 1904 till the suspension of the magazine at the close of 1911, with but few breaks, his columns appeared. They were called *Impressions, A Department of Individual Opinion,* a necessary qualification for a struggling magazine to make when turning loose on a highly conservative public so fearlessly unorthodox a pen. In the eight years he conducted this department he covered over two-hundred subjects, not by mere brief comment but by longer or shorter essays.

At the close of 1907, *The Pacific Monthly* faced disaster. Its good angel,

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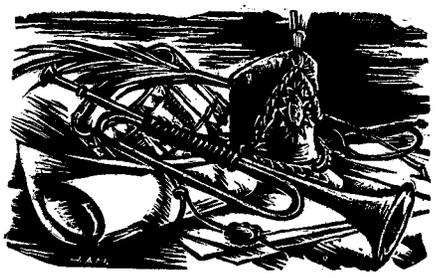
Mr. Charles Ladd, had put $300,000 into the magazine and stood to lose it. He refused longer to meet its deficits. Mr. Lute Pease, now cartoonist of *The Newark Evening News*, who had become Editor at this inauspicious time, talked the situation over with Colonel Wood. He pointed out that the small financial margin on which the magazine must now be published would not enable him to offer attractive pay for top writers' work. Colonel Wood did not want his close friend, Mr. Ladd, to lose all the money he had contributed to the magazine. He did not want the magazine to fail. Good contributions it must have, especially good fiction. Just what happened is best told in the words of a recent letter from Mr. Pease:

> One day a little gnome of a man called at my office in response to a request from me to an unknown person named Felix Benguiat. I had received from a writer signing that name a manuscript of such superlative quality, an Oriental tale, richly imaginative, masterly and brilliant with poetry, that I was certain none but a famous writer could have been the author, though I had never heard of Felix Benguiat. I was convinced that somebody was fooling me. The little gnome of a man who appeared said his real name was Rosenthal and attempted to prove to me that he could have written the story; showed me a book by him which only proved beyond a doubt that he never could have been the author of the story. I went after him so savagely that he finally explained Colonel Wood had persuaded him to pose as the author. In short, Colonel Wood, with characteristic delicacy, had tried to avoid subjecting my editorial decision to any influence of friendship or of anything other than consideration of the availability of his story.

After the success of this story Mr. Pease tells me he went to Colonel Wood's office and said:

> Colonel, I feel sure you must have a whole trunkful of unpublished manuscripts. No writer can turn out a thing like this without having back of him a lot of good work. Finally the Colonel agreed to furnish as many stories, poems, etc. as I cared to use, stipulating only that he should sign various names when more than one of his things was printed in the same number. Further, he would take no pay. Was ever an Editor in such luck?

The field of fiction was not new to Colonel Wood when he promised this largesse to *The Pacific Monthly,* a largesse he was to supply not from "a whole trunkful of unpublished manuscripts," in spite of his immense activities elsewhere, but from a hitherto untapped reservoir. Under the pseudonyms of Felix Benguiat and Francis du Bosque he had been contributing stories to Benjamin R. Tucker's famous magazine, *Liberty,* published in New York City. Mr. Tucker was then, I believe, the leading exponent of philosophical anarchism in America, a man of much learning. His magazine is full of both meat and ambrosia. The late Mr. Brownell of Scribner's told me he thought the stories Colonel Wood contributed to *Liberty* "unique in flavor, revealing an original style and a delightful personality" and in some instances faithfully preserving the atmosphere of New York's Washington Square in the eighties and



nineties, a section of the city in which Colonel Wood lived while studying law at Columbia University.

With this experience in fiction writing behind him and still sheltered under the name of Felix Benguiat, he began feeding the magazine nourishing tales. They were curiously enough of completely opposite types: fairy-tales with a Persian flavor, the so-called "escape literature," or stories of grim reality wherein the hero or heroine was victimized by an evil social and industrial system. Sometimes a tale would not sit appropriately under the Felix Benguiat disguise. It then appeared under Orrin Seaman. Felix Benguiat, privileged by pseudonymity of foreign flavor, also conveniently reviewed books particularly controversal or provocative. New verse writers for the magazine appeared: Jared Mallet, William Maxwell, Gustave Korter—*"e pluribus unum."* At particularly gaunt times in the magazine's life a single number might contain a story, a book review, both by Felix Benguiat, verse by William Maxwell or Jared Mallet or Gustave Korter and Impressions by Charles Erskine Scott Wood without the uninitiated public suspecting the one hand in the multiple contribution. Sometimes a poem appeared under his own name. His contributions and the able editorship of Mr. Pease increased the magazine's circulation from 60,000 to 100,000.

Early in 1915, aroused by Anthony Comstock's efforts to suppress Margaret Sanger's birth control movement, Colonel Wood sent a satirical discourse on this subject to *The Masses.* The Editors liked it and wanted more. They wanted more even when one particularly provocative discourse took the magazine off the newsstands. The Government suspended publication of *The Masses* because of the magazine's open hostility to World War I, but the Vanguard Press printed a small, cheap edition of the collected dialogues, with a few additions under the title "Heavenly Discourse." In printing after printing, this small book, later brought out in a larger, more expensive edition, has encircled the English-speaking world. It spread like small grass fires through college campuses. Nor have campus paths and restaurants been the book's only experience with higher education. "Heavenly Discourse" is on college library shelves and in some colleges is taught in courses covering English satire.

Early in my acquaintance with Colonel Wood, he asked me to examine the contents of a large chest of manuscripts to see if I could find anything of special worth. The chest's contents, much prose and more verse, were the accumulation of many years. I turned the manuscripts over with increasing disappointment—too many trifles, too much *vers de société,* too many lines of occasion, too much imitative style. Then I came to a yellow-sheeted, paper-covered note book containing free verse sketches of the desert, written long before the school of free verse had become articulate. To the broad bosom of the desert Colonel Wood had returned again and again for summer camping since the days when, a young army officer fresh from the East, he, with his company, had crossed there. In the note book, the desert was painted with words that in later careful revision, were to be printed in many anthologies and school readers. Here, too, were the matured thoughts, born long ago under the stars when he first felt the desert's compelling power—thoughts about Nature's ways contrasted to man's, about war and peace, poverty and plenty, bondage and freedom—thoughts that, from youth to old age, stung him creatively wide awake whenever his head rested on that sage-pungent earth. At that time no one had celebrated either in poetry or painting (he later brought Childe Hassam out to paint it) the American desert nor had any certain aspect of Nature stirred a poet to make, in this particular manner, the probing, insistent, inventoried comparison between Nature in her largesse, freedom and beauty, and man in his poverty, enslavement, and ugliness.

I LEAVE critical judgment of this poem, which has aroused so much praise and censure, to qualified pens, and turn to the history of "The Poet in the Desert," more colorful than that of most books of poetry. Colonel Wood first printed the poem at his own expense in 1914 under the dreary title,

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"Civilization." A year later it appeared under its present title. In 1918 a new, much-revised edition was printed. It has delighted me to call this edition "the Prince and the Pauper" for, while a portion of the edition was printed on fine, handmade, linen paper in the best black ink and bound in substantial boards, the other, far larger portion, at Emma Goldman's request, was printed on cheap paper with indifferent ink and paper-bound. Emma Goldman was lecturing to large, mostly proletarian, audiences all over America. She wanted a cheap edition of "The Poet in the Desert" to be sold, with other literature, at her lectures. I have not the exact figures but I know that in this way several thousand were sold. It is my belief no poem, with the possible exception of Markham's "Man with the Hoe," has been so widely read and loved by the working class of this country as "The Poet in the Desert." It went into the trenches of World War I. It has circulated in lumber camps and hobo "jungles." Our library contains one of the paper-bound copies rebound in oil cloth to protect it from weather, for it was carried like a lamb in the bosom of an itinerant tinker who travelled up and down the Oregon and Washington Coast repairing small machines. It had been carefully indexed. There were many marginal notes and much text underlining. The tinker, whose name was Frasier, referred to it always as "the good book." He told us of once riding a box car with men automatically made hoboes by the depression. Being hungry, they had all decided to leave the train at Sacramento in search of food. Meanwhile, Frasier told us, to distract them from their hunger, he began to read from his worn copy of "The Poet in the Desert." Whenever he paused the men would yell "go on!" He was in the middle of one of the longer sections when the train reached Sacramento. "Hell, let's go on to San Francisco and finish this," one of the men said. They all agreed and so went on to the big city while Frasier read to the end. "As soon as those men got a job," Frasier said, his face glowing, "each one bought a copy of the good book." Colonel Wood offered to exchange this worn copy for one of the better-made books but Frasier refused, saying his copy was part of him. Yet one day, years after we had first seen it, he climbed our hill and laid the little book in Colonel Wood's hands saying he would now like to leave it with him as he had premonitions of death due to a recent illness. I think Colonel Wood prized it more than his Shakespeare Folio.

Such stories could be multiplied. We have in our files many touching letters from men and women in the labor ranks who felt the beauty of the poem because of its social challenge and the social challenge because of its beauty.

IN 1929 The Lantern Press published "Poems from the Ranges," containing, with other purely Western verse, the famous "First Snow" which was originally published in the immediate ancestor of *The Saturday Review, The New York Evening Post Literary Review.* Except for two other privately printed books, "Selected Poems" (with Sara Bard Field) and "Sonnets to Sappho," Colonel Wood made no effort to publish more of his poetic work. Indeed he made no effort to publish anything. If publication came in the natural flow of events, well and good. If not, equally was it well and good. "Uncaring praise or blame" he once truly wrote of himself. Poetry, if worthy, would take care of itself. Meanwhile there were immediate social issues of grave importance about which he was aflame. So he constantly interrupted his poetic writing to protest passionately against growing interference in personal liberty in "Too Much Government" and against other social sins in "Earthly Discourse." He was eighty-four when he wrote the latter. When one considers the powerful irony in "Satan and the Publisher," the identification of himself with tender romance in "King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid," the vigorous review of "The Supreme Court" which elicited praiseful letters from many able jurists, one is amazed to realize what high emotional and intellectual flames burned under the snow. I am glad that a renewed demand for "Earthly Discourse" is causing its republication even though new plates have had to be made.

Colonel Wood has left many unpublished manuscripts, among them several dramas. Of these the most important is "Circe" which Maurice Browne has called "one of the seven noblest plays of our time." For all his writings, published and unpublished, completed or uncompleted, his notebooks, journals, diaries, etc., the Huntington Memorial Library is offering a safe home where they will be accessible to the future historian of the social and cultural aspects of this coast. Only after a lapse of time can the stature of "that grand old rebel," as the late Senator Phelan always called him, be properly measured and his far-reaching contribution to thought and culture be adequately understood.

Sara Bard Field, herself a distinguished poet, author of the long poem "Barabbas," is the widow of Colonel Wood. She was prominent in the Woman Suffrage movement, and has since championed all liberal causes.

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

THE *SRL* GOES TO TEN PARTIES

This week you are cordially invited to attend not one but ten parties. Each of them appears in a well known literary work. From the descriptions given below, can you identify the story and author? Allowing 5 points for each correct answer, a score of 60 is par, 70 is very good, and 80 or better is excellent. You'll find the answers on page 40.

1. At this house party, a guest created great embarrassment by teaching the family cat to speak.

2. The guests played croquet, using live flamingoes for mallets, live hedgehogs for balls, and animated playing cards for arches.

3. This New Year's party was interrupted by the appearance of a middle aged recluse carrying a little girl and announcing that he had found her mother dead in the snow.

4. The host at this music hall party got so drunk on punch that he was unable to propose to his sister's schoolmate.

5. In her hurry to leave the ball before the clock struck twelve, the heroine lost one of her slippers.

6. An uninvited guest appeared at a wedding reception, guzzled some wine, and then eloped with the bride.

7. After their jolly Christmas dinner, the family played blind man's buff and animal-vegetable-or-mineral.

8. While the plague raged outside, guests at the costume ball in the prince's castle danced until midnight, when an uninvited guest entered in the guise of a plague victim.

9. While the other girl guests at this betrothal party were taking their afternoon nap, one slipped downstairs and proposed to the groom-to-be.

10. The dinner guests arrived a day early, played a word-association game, and spent the night in jail.

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Poets and Dragonflies

Lack of Personality in Modern Verse

GERARD PREVIN MEYER

IT is really striking (when one comes to think of it) how many of the "recognized" younger poets of our day write in a style that carries no signature. What shall we call it? mass production in verse? assonance on the assembly line? group poetry? For it bears the same relation to real poetry that a machine-made reproduction of an oil painting bears to the original. The colors are there, and the subject-matter (if by subject-matter be understood the outward trappings of our existence—a debatable point), and the surface of the style: only the soul is missing, the contact of the dynamic human being who drew these unanticipated elements out of himself and on to canvas. The copy is often, indeed, smoother than the original: it is touched up a little, the brush strokes are not reproduced. Yet it is not good enough.

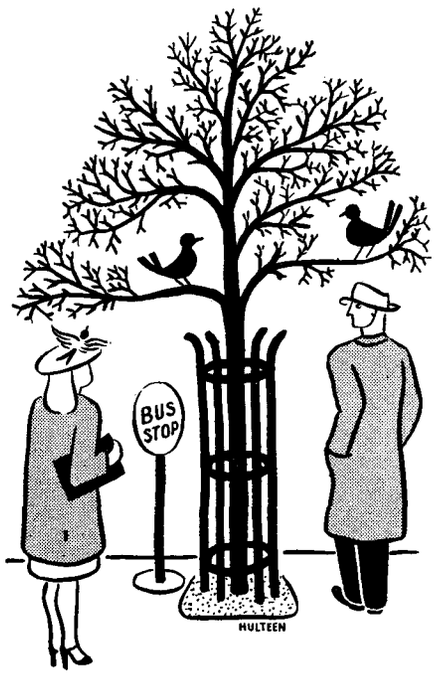
I defy anybody, not already acquainted with the selections, to tell me which of the poems currently appearing in periodicals over a variety of names was written by whom, bearing upon it the authentic stamp of personality. The fact is that, of words and images, hopes and fears, alarums and excursions, poetry of the present moment has been extraordinarily full; while, of personality, in the sense that we can say at a reading of a poem, "This is a man! I could never mistake this for other than ——'s work!" there has been little if anything. Poetry of the late thirties and early forties, indeed, has been going around in circles: and the circles have either had no centers, or the centers have been original poets of the last generation: whereas the true center of a poet's work must be within himself.

"I was, being human, born alone," wrote Elinor Wylie in the twenties. That quality, that power, to be alone, with one's *own* thoughts, with one's own soul, which marks the real poet, and which pierces the heart of everybody who has come to know, at some time in his own life, how alone everybody must be in the end, and how ultimately a man must face and face down his problems in his own heart—that power does not, it seems, reside with many of our most highly touted younger writers. Is it their youth? for many of them are in their twenties or early thirties: and this realization of the ultimate necessity comes with maturity . . . is this why? One remembers the great poets of the past who lived to no great age, and rejects the thesis.

They were alone. It is true they moved in what are known as "literary circles," in what Charles Lamb called "mutual admiration societies"; but the fact remains that, when it came to writing, Keats sat down and wrote not as Shelley did, while few poets are as dissimilar as those two friends, Wordsworth and Coleridge, who shared the same volume together in 1798, when "Lyrical Ballads" broke upon the startled world. Nobody could have mistaken the author of "The Ancient Mariner" for the man who wrote "Tintern Abbey."

In some poets, this feeling of aloneness has approached the morbid, as in the author of the following poignant lines, believed to be by Poe:

From childhood's hour I have not
been
As others were—I have not seen
As others saw—I could not bring
My passions from a common spring
From the same source I have not
taken
My sorrow—I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone—
And all I loved—I loved alone—
Then—in my childhood—in the dawn
Of a most stormy life—was drawn
From every depth of good and ill
The mystery which binds me still—
From the torrent, or the fountain—
From the red cliff of the mountain—
From the sun that round me roll'd
In its autumn tint of gold—
From the lightning in the sky
As it passed me flying by—
From the thunder and the storm—
And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view.



But every good thing is bad when done to excess, and few will deny that Poe was prone to many sorts of excess. (I should interpolate that Blake, at least, would not agree with this point of view: Blake, who wrote, "The Path of excess is the Road to wisdom.")

Why is it that, to borrow the words of T. S. Eliot on another subject, "the prospect of delight is wanting" in so much verse written and published today? Certainly not for any of the reasons that used to be adduced against "the new poetry." The "new poetry" is no longer new, no longer radical, an affront to the established literary order, it has arrived, it is permitted, even encouraged; courses are given in the universities, and even high schools "teach" Eliot, Crane, Hopkins, Pound (although the late Mr. Pound, now under indictment for sedition because of his fascist broadcasts from Axis soil, is a severely dated personality). Whereas I, as an undergraduate, heard of Eliot only accidentally in my senior year, the poor "ole fossil" is now being dissected, and "thematized," all over the Midwest and other points of the academic compass (from which places of origin, incidentally, he drew his first poetic breath).

The Victorian tradition in poetry has been dealt its death-blow; but what has risen in its place? Have we, in poetry, reached that point where, in the mythology of poetry-as-history, made popular by John Livingston Lowes, the revolt has won its point, and hardened into a new convention?

I DO not go so far as to say: this is what has happened. We can't go that far because we must reject the idea of progress in poetry, just as we are beginning to reject it in the rest of our human affairs. (For a brilliant discussion of the essentially materialistic and mythical nature of the idea of progress, I refer the reader to any of the writings of Dr. Jacques Barzun —especially "Darwin, Marx, Wagner.") No, there is no such thing as progress in poetry: has there been any "progress" since Shakespeare? We cannot cavil at poetry by saying, it shows no progress (which is what "hardened into a new convention" means, essentially). We can only object when it *isn't*—when we look for the object, the poem as the result of the personality of the poet, and find that *there is none.* Either the poet has no personality, or, what is more likely, he hasn't come to it yet, or, what is rarer but, when encountered, most demoralizing—the poet has a personality, but prefers to conceal it and wear the personality of somebody

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else who has paved the way for the acceptance of a certain type of writing with his own blood, sweat, and tears.

These, truly, are the "hollow men." Having no center themselves, or not caring to dig for it, they cannot achieve anything *central*. They are the dragonflies of letters, skimming along the surfaces of a world they lack the desire or—let us give them the benefit of the doubt—the ability to enter under their own power. They often dazzle, like the dragonfly in the sun, with a reflected glow. Many dragonflies manage to get published—often, in fact, more than some actual poets. No, not because of any innate perversity in editors—but because the actual poet sometimes makes mistakes. His work is real; therefore, it is more liable to the shortcomings of reality. The dragonfly, on the other hand, never tangles his feet; he keeps in the shine; he is more polished than the original poet; but somewhere in the process of manufacture, while the impurities of the original poet are strained out, so too the purities, the essence, the real poetry, is lost.

As an experiment, I myself have taken some of the poems of Oscar Williams, the original, not always smooth, real poet who is also responsible for some of the most interesting anthologies of our day ("New Poems, 1940," etc.): and borrowed certain surface qualities to produce something which might pass as a poem. I give this "product of a dragonfly" herewith:

BULLETIN

Stereoscope of the salad-bowls, our journals
explode the sight with neons: clustered, die,
and, clashing to the ears of subway tunnels,
perpetuate the hoax of yesterday.

The perfumed show of canopied subvention
crooks its knee to the tread of subterfuge
while, desperate in the doors of evening's mansion,
hesitancy evades the vermifuge.

The movietone resumes the seven leagues
till on the screen of time that never marches
the carriers of habit doff their wigs
and see! where the desert the lone traveller parches!

Observe the contemporary use of language, the violent images, the tantalizing obscurity which suggests some hidden but undoubtedly depressing meaning, the glimpses of the contemporary city scene, the fashionable assonant rhymes.

In an earlier day, 1895 to be exact, that discerning poet, critic, and Johnson, Lionel, wrote of his contemporary John Davidson, as follows: "Each poem has lived in the poet's life, and issues from a living fire of passion, imagination, thought: there is no *clever impersonality* about it." Isn't it just that "clever impersonality" which is the besetting sin of so much of the verse being printed today? It is clever; it is impersonal. In fact, it has all the qualities of the best advertising, rather than of the best poetry.

Lionel Johnson found some other things in Davidson's poetry which one would be hard put to it to discover in the present-day spate: " . . . it is impossible not to see what the poet is at and about . . . these poems have each their initial, central, culminating consistency and unity of design. . . . In each a situation, an emotion, has been faced and wrestled with and *mastered*: the solutions are triumphant and satisfying." *Mastery* is not a quality often encountered in a poem nowadays: which is no doubt why we would call few of our younger poets *masters* of the art.

What we find in profusion instead are tired tricks, surfaces without centers, the products of slick characters, the unconscious gone haywire and calling upon such predecessors as Rimbaud for justification—whereas a strict and complete examination of the French boy-wonder that was Rimbaud can only compel the reader to two conclusions:

1. That Rimbaud at heart enjoyed life; and that

2. After the disillusionment of his romanticism by the ugliness of some realities, he plunged into excesses of morbid sensibility, from which he finally recoiled when he realized that his writing was leading him down a blind alley, or, as Miss Starkie has so well said, that "he was not God."

Amidst all the futility, today, nevertheless, there are signs of health. The persistence of some fine older talents is one; the other is that the gains of the first quarter of this century have been held—we shall never again be thrown back to the last ditch of Victorian repression-and-excess, with its attendant sentimentalities. And the dragonflies are short-lived. Some day they will live only in a footnote in some learned dissertation, perhaps one written at one of the very universities where they were spawned.

Until that blessed day, however, it were well to remember, with Dr. Johnson, that we should not be misled by "such intellectual excellence as a mind not yet called forth to action can display."

Alien Atolls

By Lt. (j. g.) Jesse Stuart, U.S.N.R.

ALIEN atolls I know will not have trees
Such as the blackgums, sassafras and beeches
That are as tethered and as tough as these . . .
They'll have pandanas, palms on their small reaches.
They will not have red-raining of the leaves
From clouded tree-tops with a preening sound;
Nor will they have an autumn wind that grieves
Among sawbriars close to frosted ground.
How can there be cool water good to drink
On these atolls scorched by a torrid sun?
It is enough to make one stop and think
As he stands where these lonesome waters run.
One can't breathe wind fresh-scented in the morn
By fingers of the pines and foddershocks
Where there are coconuts instead of corn
And coral studs instead of pine-loved rocks.

ATOLLS are softer earth than stubborn hills
That do grow stalwart men of tougher clay;
Atolls won't have an April stream that spills
Over a ledge into a rainbow spray . . .
Nor will they have tough mountain paths to climb
That build strong muscles, make one's chest expand
For lowland walkers have an easy time . . .
Their muscles have the softness of their land.
Nor will their natives have a hillman's eye
Since they have been accustomed to discern
Only a little land, lagoon, and sky
And not the copperheads among the fern . . .
They will have flying fish instead of trout
And soft grasshut instead of hardwood shack
A season's sameness that may wear one out . . .
For a mountaineer there'll be no turning back.

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Peace Table

BY FLORENCE CONVERSE

WHEN, on the hour, the Peace makers came in—
The Delegates and Plenipotentiaries
Of Principalities and Major Powers
And Kingdoms and Republics, democratic
Or soviet, capitalistic, communistic—
He was already there: a youngish man,
In one of the less conspicuous fauteuils.
Somebody's secretary, they may have thought,
If they gave him a thought, as they unscrewed fountain pens,
Adjusted blotters, sifted notes, and studied
The day's Agenda; each one pondering
How to put over his own particular brand
Of enlightened selfishness. On every face
That inward, absent look of the man absorbed
In his problem: that last minute, marshalling look
Of the specialist, responsible and ready,
Waiting the gavel-stroke, the distinguished roll-call.

One minute still to go. Across the table,
A Delegate snapped out of his brown-study,
Compared his wrist-watch with the official time-piece
Above the head of the young man opposite,
And let his wandering eye rest lazily,
Then with upstartled eyebrow and a twinkle,
Upon the quaint behavior of that same
Young man. A roving smile began to flicker,
Amused, discreet, uncertain, round the board,
From lip to lip.
"Seems to have brought his lunch,"
Murmured a puzzled Delegate to a neighbor,
Who, cautiously from the side of his mouth, suggested:
"Doctor's orders, probably!"
But whispers
Abruptly faded, decorous smiles forsook
Lips, breathless, frozen—And amid that hush,
Amid that awakened silence, every eye,
Intent, unveiled upon a Mystery,
Beheld the ancient Sacrifice set forth.

He was known of them in the breaking of bread.

But when he leaned to them and lifted up
The Grail, the silence quaked with terrible sounds:
"Not of that Cup!—Not of that Cup!" they cried;
And leapt to their feet, and backed away from the table,
Beating the air, upsetting the solid chairs,
Fighting with one another in the choke
Of the ceremonial doorway: fleeing away,
Fleeing away from their Gethsemane.
"Not of that Cup!"
The clamor of those echoes,
The panic-hounded trample of those feet,
Retreated into an uneasy quiet
Presently fluttered by the hesitating,
Cautious tiptoe of returning statesmen
Impelled by curiosity, or maybe
Second thought. A wary, breathless remnant,
—The more responsible, or shall we say
Responsive few?—came creeping round the turn
Of the terrace, to the nearest long French window;
And halting awkwardly they peered within,
Over each other's shoulders, pressing back,
Not forward. There were five or six, not more
Some of them still could hardly control their panting;
Some of the open, intelligent brows were damp.

Always their eyes (and some were tragic eyes,
And all were shadowed dark with brooding thought),
Rested upon the baffling face of Him
Who waited at the table in the room.
And even when the faltering words began
After uncounted seconds to seep through
Their huddle, and they spoke with one another,
Yet, they never looked at one another.
Only at Him—they looked.
Defensive whisper,
Tentative, suggesting that *His Kingdom*
Is not of this world, dropped without conviction
Down the well of Truth.—But what is Truth?
Not of this world?—Thy Kingdom come—on earth?
And all those old perplexing contradictions,
Those Gospel paradoxes that still lurk
Within the groomed and educated minds
Of gentlemen and statesmen, trembled now
From lips accustomed to the diplomatic
Bit and bridle, suddenly unharnessed
Willy-nilly. And the air was secret
And murmurous with reluctant apothegm
From Scripture: as—*He came to bring a sword,*
Not peace.—A sword? In Me ye might have peace?

And: *Let him deny himself,—let him deny*
Himself—that soft, despairing, helpless whisper,
Over and over again. *Though he gain a world,*
What shall it profit a man to lose his soul?
Let him deny himself, for, *Whosoever*
Shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's
The same shall save it. What shall it profit a man
To gain the whole world, if he lose his soul?
And: *Whosoever would be first among you,*
Shall be your servant,—Whosoever of you
Will be the chiefest, he shall be the servant
Of all.
A shaking voice said, "What is he doing
Now, is he writing?" But another answered,
"He seems to be making criss-cross marks on the blotter,
The way one does," and a chilly shudder ran
Among them, and their foreheads shone wet and clammy.
Are ye able to drink of my cup?
They mopped their faces,
And when they had watched him there some while in silence,
A grudging voice, a voice with a cutting edge,
Said, low, "We're all prepared to make concessions."
And under his breath another mocked: "Concessions!
The fine—self-centred, pompous, basic word."
A pause—a humorous lip, an arrogant nostril,
But eyes that did not cease to probe the Eternal.

And presently the courteous interchange
Resumed with, sotto voce: "Our instructions?"
Another pause; a shadowy, moody voice,
Thinking into the heart of the impasse:
"My country took a chance in me—so what?—
Myself, alone, I know what I would do—
At least—I thought I knew—I hope I know.
But would the nation back me?—Could it?—Should it?—
The so-called Christian democratic nation
I represent?—But do I represent it?
Have I a right to force the Christian issue?"

"Damn your self-righteous ethic!" growled a voice.
"Have you the power? That's the ultimate question.
Some of us—are waiting to be shown."

Power—to become the Sons of God?

A restless, shifting of weight—a nervous recoil—
The long French window parted silently,
And hasty hands went out to close the crack,
And hastily drew off, and other hands
Went out, and hung on the air, and fluttered down,
While some one's muffled, groping voice intoned
The Seventh Beatitude (St. Matthew V).

And the hush-hush, quite without warning, blew up with a shout,
As an over-wrought statesman proclaimed at the top of his lungs:
"But this is unconditional surrender!"
And laughed a braying laugh, and clapped his hand
Over his horrified mouth.—
At last they had turned
And looked at one another, a questing look,

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Still steadied on the Eternal, not yet focused
To Time, or what we like to call the Present.
But coming back. A slow, reluctant look,
Informed of understanding, loath to turn
Again to old distrusts. But coming back.
Some one said, "Well?"—And some one countered, "If?"
But when the realist that posed the question
Of Power, would have shut the long French window,
They shook their heads, unwilling, yet uncertain.
"But if?" they said. "But which?" they said. "But who?"
"But how?" they said. "But if?"
And slow, submerging
Beneath familiar, safe reiteration
Of last things first and first things last (discussion
Of old immunities, the prior claim,
The precedent), their vacillating souls,
Highminded, but uneasy, playing safe.
—The most unsafest way for souls to play—
Declined upon delay, and sought relief
Within the comfortable camouflage
Of "après vous, monsieur;" the courtesies
And exigencies of The Protocol.

* * * * * * *

So He sat there with the broken bread
And the rejected cup—waiting—waiting—

By a Jungle Grave

Lt. (j. g.) Simons Roof, U.S.N.R.

TO come at last from leafy dark
of jagged shadows, talking night
of cockatoos and restless wings,
to step out from the crowding vault
of vine and root, the pool, the pit,
from tendrils brushing cheek like tongues;
from air a fabric taut with web

and dizziness of flower rot,
to enter finally beside
the body mound, the greylimb cross;
behind the steps of one first there,
I feel the closing in of sod,
the nearing stars, the choking earth,
and death dropped down against that face.

And I forget finality
of flame, the freezing touch of steel
that ended worlds within his skull;
remembering the single self
of all, the noon erupting blood,
afraid or daring death or time
for neither; what he felt inside;

the blade that cut from others what
he most desired uncut from him.
Remembering the world now lost,
dead seed of Springs, of dreams unsung,
the path unwalked away from here.
To come to kneel beside his grave,
the numbered in the numberless,

I feel his grief like hammerblows
upon the brain demanding peace,
demanding earth for work and love,
and cities spiring to the sun.
While there, beyond the jungle grave,
the bright volcano ringed in cloud,
too low to call a monument . . .

The author is a Lt., j. g., in the Naval Reserve, recently in command of a mine-sweeper in the Pacific area.

Refugees

By Norma Lay

COLLECTORS of curiosa must forgo
these faces: skin hung on lowered thoughts—awry,
left by the mind to dry.

These have forgotten even that thought may be tossed
up like a hat toward sun. But do not despise
banked burning in their eyes.

The Warhead

By Don Gordon

DIRECTION is plain as a compass needle in the
English sky;

Perceive the hole in the cloud, the future caught on the
Norden crosshairs;

the rocket travels without visa
the rocket is beyond the weather;
in the stratosphere there is no
morality, there are only facts.

The weapon and the man are opposite in texture and
purpose;
The explosives move starward, the heart goes underground;
At this depth we aim the gun at a continent and hit a child.

V-1
V-2
V to the nth power:

death is the international language; at this height

it can be read even by the unborn.

It was thought the brotherhood would come gently out of
time
By the public teacher, by good men, by gifts of flowers, and
by love.
Peace was dreamed of as a bird: after its erratic flight
It would settle on the white roof and sing to us.

Direction is plain as a compass needle in the English sky:
Kinship will be thrust upon us; necessity like peace is
jet-propelled,
The rocket may teach us to adore the infant in the warhead.

Sound of Lancasters

By Eric Wilson Barker

THIS is my fuel of dreams, fed from the night
By steel tornadoes whirling their mad sound,
And this the huge crescendo of my hate,
Roaring like hives above my native ground.

Outraged at heart, a very world away
From England trenched with wounds, I lie and wait,
And hear the darkness splitting with my hate,
The beautiful and terrible sound.

Rolling like surf among the burning stars,
Sundering the wall of sleep apart,
Their cloudy thunders lap me through the night,
And stoke the fires that smolder in my heart.

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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ARGUING ABOUT POETRY

IT is apparent that this Poetry Number of *The Saturday Review* features several articles critical of modern poetry. It has seemed to the editor of the issue that it was about time. What is loosely called the "technique" of poetry has long outrun the analytical ability of most critics. Poets have gone upon their independent ways rejoicing, many of them without any attempt to clarify their intent or language for the average intelligent reader; and a metaphorical jargon has evolved which, it seems to me, Mr. Hillyer, in this issue, has analyzed with acumen. The modern poet has attempted to assume somewhat the function of the tribal medicine man, with a lot of hocus-pocus not to be questioned, and, somehow, to be held sacrosanct. Those of us who have had a long and abiding love for the art, have always believed in its free functioning, and still will not subscribe to any *Leagues Against* this or that in poetry (or in any art), have never desired to play into the hands of the merely philistine. But the more articles that can be written to try and clarify the situation, the better.

A case in point was a recent meeting which your present editor attended, a meeting designed to help younger writers of all kinds. The composition of the meeting was: one eminent critic and biographer, one of the world's leading novelists, an extremely well-known playwright, and producer of plays, and your humble servant. Discussion of the novels and the plays under consideration was fairly simple when compared to choice among the many books of modern poetry which had come before the committee. The playwright, it may be said, has, in his time, been known to write not unacceptable verse. He is certainly one who has proved himself in the past a man with a gift for experimental fantasy in the theatre, with imagination and vision out of the ordinary. He, frankly, bogged down in the poetry, though he had tackled it with determination. He found himself floundering in a morass of the metaphorical; and the upshot was an expression, both visual and vocal, of despair. The images shifted and replaced each other too rapidly, the intent galloped off in too many directions at once, the concision omitted too many important connecting links. The result appeared to be chaos. The novelist and the critic found themselves in little better case, though all finally agreed upon the worth of one poet who has been bitterly arraigned by a new organization who pillory such established reputations as those of Kenneth Fearing, Marianne Moore, and E. E. Cummings.

I do not wish anyone sitting in the stocks! The late Leslie Stephen had something interesting to say about the poetry of Robert Browning. Browning's "Paracelsus" is certainly, to say the least, diffuse! Browning had heard complaint of its "verbosity,"

> and so tried to remedy this failing by the surgical expedient of cutting out the usual connecting words. Relative pronouns henceforth become scarce in his poetry, and the grammatical construction often a matter of conjecture. Words are forcibly jammed together instead of being articulately combined . . . but the "obscurity" never afterwards reached the pitch of "Sordello" [only the first and last lines of which Tennyson said he could understand, and they were both lies! Ed.] It is due to the vagueness with which the story is rather hinted than told, as well as to the subtlety and intricacy of the psychological expositions. The subtlety and vigor of the thought are indeed surprising, and may justify frequent comparisons with Shakespeare. . . . Still, Browning seems to have been misled by a fallacy. It was quite legitimate to subordinate the external incidents to the psychological development in which he was really interested, but to secure the subordination by making the incidents barely intelligible was not a logical consequence. . . . We should not understand Hamlet's psychological peculiarities the better if we had to infer his family troubles from indirect hints.

Westland Marston, who saw the "Sordello" manuscript, is reported to have said, "Browning's system of composition is to write down on a slate, in prose, what he wants to say, and then turn it into verse, striving after the greatest amount of condensation possible; thus if an exclamation will suggest his meaning, he substitutes this for a whole sentence." Even though Swinburne, with his headlong ferocious generosity, cried that to charge Browning with obscurity "is about as accurate as to call Lynceus purblind," it is also true that in Browning's "Sordello," "he had become so familiar with the story which he professed to tell that he failed to make allowance for his readers' diffculties." Yet Browning, in his turn, was never guilty of metaphorical muddle.

I should certainly not "call Lynceus purblind" in the case of Mr. W. H. Auden; yet in reading his recent poem founded upon an examination of Shakespeare's "Tempest," the comments of Stephen on Browning seemed to possess a certain cogency; and Leslie Stephen was the parent from whom the late Virginia Woolf derived her own extraordinary talents.

No one, certainly, "writes like Browning," today; but the condensation, the lack of allowance for readers' difficulties, the metaphorical muddle have now progressed so far as to have taken complete possession of, for instance, the brief poem, generically termed the lyric. It is a misnomer, for today there are extremely few "lyrics" written. (Mr. Auden, by the way, has several in the same long poem to which I have referred). The average short poem in the periodicals conceived to be of the literary left is quite unintelligible to the average reader. Somebody said to me the other day, "I get no pleasure out of that sort of thing!" and I was surprised into the reply, "You don't, surely, expect *pleasure* out of poetry nowadays, do you?" My remark was extreme, granted; but I get more puzzle than pleasure out of a deal of it! Nor can I discover the fascination of psychological exposition, and the vigor of thought, that Sir Leslie Stephen found in the poetry of Robert Browning. Yet I continue to read modern poetry with some eagerness, and occasionally to stumble upon reward. I realize that times have altered manners. In her recent "Poetry Bulletin," Miss Dorothy Hobson seems to have summed up the situation rather well:

> Let us be forever on our guard against such intellectual dishonesty in ourselves as may lead to the blind following of a trend without personal analysis; let us have courage by all means, to take sides publicly against insincerity, against deliberate mystification for meaningless effect, against the shallow, the false and the meretricious, wherever we may find it in the field of poetry. But let us not take sides against other poets. The sincere experimenter is the research scientist of poetry, and if he achieves one lonely miracle, opens one door to new potentialities in the use of language, let us be grateful.

One more word about this number. In spite of the most strenuous efforts it has been impossible to include all the material originally contemplated for the issue. At least one article and certain poems will have to be printed later.

W. R. B.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Masters's "The New World"

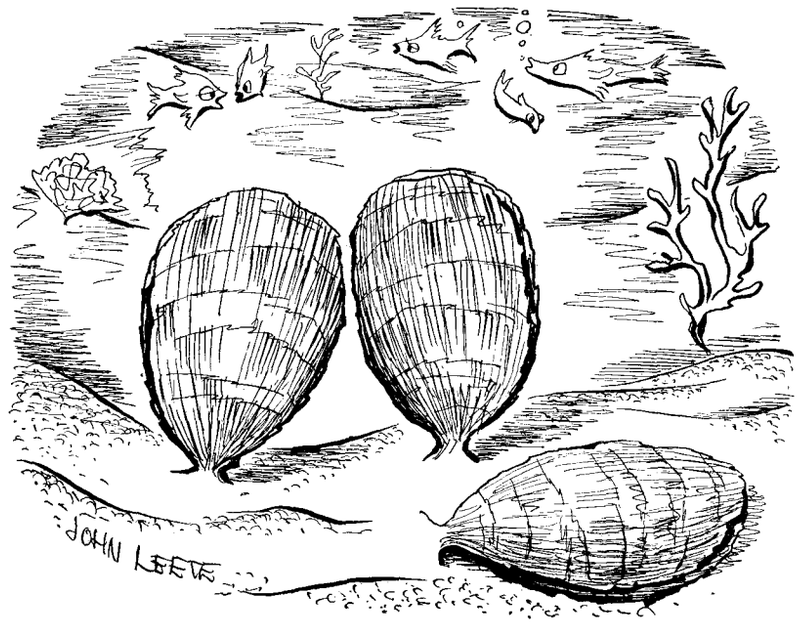
SIR: Of the various long poems celebrating America's discovery of her own stature published in the past decade, the one that most often returns to my mind is Edgar Lee Masters's "The New World." Published by the Appleton-Century Co. seven years ago, this narrative of two hundred and seventy pages did not receive the attention it was entitled to. At the date of its publication interest in poetry had subsided; a few years before or a few years afterwards a vital interest would have been evoked by a poem of the scope and accomplishment of Edgar Lee Masters's. It may be, too, there is something in the poem that got in the way of its general acceptance.

Edgar Lee Masters has a mystical vision of America, of the American hemisphere: for him it always was a land of prophecies. This Radiant Land of the mounds, the temples, the fabulous cities, the great spaces was a challenge to Old-World men to force Ocean, in the image of the Latin poet, to loose its bonds, so that man might enter into a new estate. The meaning that America has for Edgar Lee Masters is in the description of the Capitol that Washington laid the foundations of, that keeps the memory of Jefferson, that has the light coming from Franklin.

> And this great Capitol looks like tranquility;
> Its words speak for a whole people,
> And these columned wings, this dome
> Seems the presence of the New World
> From coast to coast;
> Its words call for a more perfect Union.
> And these pediments of sculpture
> Express the friendly and just union of a free people.
> And when the sky above the Potomac
> And the Virginia hills is a cloudless blue,
> This dome with its statue to Liberty
> Is a sculptured paean to the eternal love of the human heart.

But the poem does not end with this positive realization; it ends with a question: have the greed and violence that destroyed other civilizations been bypassed by America? The questioning attitude at the end of it all has made, I think, against the general acceptance of "The New World."

The story is told in blank verse. There are many kinds of blank verse, and I should like to indicate how Edgar Lee Masters's differs from other modes. He is, as we know, a man of law: he has made pleas and listened to them; he has been attentive to judicial summations; he has studied the great masters of forensic eloquence from Cicero down. His practice gives character to the verse of "The New World" as it gave character to the verse of "The Spoon River Anthology." It has that contained eloquence, that marshalling of testimony that is the feature of real



"Walter's pearl is troubling him again!"

forensic eloquence. And often in "The New World" one hears the eloquence of the prosecutor:

> It was Hamilton born on the Island of Nevis
> In the West Indies, not born in the New World, nor in the spirit of it,
> Born out of wedlock of a woman named Levine
> Who loaded the Old World on the back of the New World,
> Who inoculated the New World with the diseases of the Old World,
> Who took the bread of the poor and gave it to the banks,
> Who gave the government to the banks in exchange of political offices and honors.
> The New World thereby took an evil spirit into its veins
> And by necessity became its slave.

The poem begins with an assembling of witnesses—"Pytheas of Gaul in the days of Alexander the Great," Strabo, Seneca, Virgil: through their enterprise, vision, speculation:

> The land called America gradually came into view,
> Even as a shore does approached by travellers.

But America already had its history and its legend; the poet brings them over to us in flashes.—

> Where the Mayan maize
> Was grown by handfuls by the Illini.

But it is the land itself in its expanse, its variety of climate and feature that motivates the whole poem. And this is perhaps fitting in a poem that celebrates the New World. More than any oppression or any ideology, the sense of the land in its wideness and its fruitfulness must have affected the people, causing them to seek independence from the bounded lands they had come from. Still, even before these people reached it, in America as in Europe and Asia, there was the enactment of human history:

> The Western hemisphere lived, wrought, warred, and died
> All along the years when Augustus was ruling,
> And barbarous Europe was slaughtering, down to the days
> When London Bridge was built and Genghis Khan captured Pekin.
> . . . . . .
> The great empire of Xibolba had existed in Central America;
> And afterwards the Aztecs, coming from the land of the Flamingoes,
> Settled Mexico, and built Tezcuco, a western Athens,
> With its palace Tezcuco of council chambers,
> And halls of justice and spacious salons
> For men of science and poets, who sang of the all-powerful god,
> And the brevity of life, and of joys to be seized,
> And the good remembrance of the just man.

The speculations of philosophers, the voyages of visionaries like St. Brendan of Kerry, the enterprise of navigators, the world's inevitable expansion, bring the Radiant Land into the ken of European man. The great navigators make landings, the conquistadors appear, the native civilizations are destroyed, European colonists take over tracts, for the primeval people:

> Their tepees like shocks of corn passed away,
> Their fires died before the hearths of the cabins.

There are wars between the French and English for possession of the north; there is the War of Independence, and at last there stand forth:

> Washington, Jefferson and Madison
> To found a nation, to fuse the hostile bloods to one flesh.

(*Continued on page* 32)

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TRADE Winds

DIGGING UP material for a commentary on Alexandre Dumas for Frank Papp's stimulating new radio feature, "The World's Great Novels," I encountered statistics that were staggering. Dumas wrote and published, according to his own testimony, 1200 volumes. He once turned out sixty full-length novels in a single year. He said, "It should be as easy for a novelist to make novels as for an apple tree to make apples," and he proceeded to prove his point by writing nearly 70,000 pages of fiction in addition to sixty-four plays and innumerable volumes of travel and essays. He was the first and, so far as I know, only famous author to hire a corps of ghost-writers and put the production of books on an assembly-line basis. One day he met his son (the author of "Camille") and asked "Have you read my new novel yet?" "No," said the son. "Have you?"

Dumas owned a theatre, a newspaper, and a magazine, slept only four hours out of twenty-four, and was involved in over a hundred lawsuits. For pets he had twelve dogs, three apes, two parrots, two peacocks, a vulture, a pheasant, and a cat. He entertained so lavishly that, when he rented a chateau in the country, the railroad's receipts for the local station increased 20,000 francs the first summer. He lived like a prince of the "Arabian Nights"—and died a pauper.

Dumas was born in 1802, the son of a famous general of the French Revolution and the grandson of a Negress of St. Domingo. In one year (1844) he produced two of the most popular novels ever written: "The Three Musketeers" and "The Count of Monte Cristo." He dissipated a huge fortune by unbridled extravagance; on his deathbed (in 1870) he wryly remarked "I came to Paris with twenty francs. That is exactly the sum with which I die." "The World's Great Novels," sponsored by NBC's University of the Air, is broadcast nationally on Friday evenings at 11:30. It's well worth waiting up to hear. . . .

YOU SOON WILL be seeing Ernie Pyle in the movies. It will not be Ernie in person—he would die of embarrassment at anything like that—but a faithful impersonation by Burgess ("Buzz") Meredith, who considers it the fattest part he ever played. *Time* magazine recently referred to his having appeared at the studio "bewigged" for the role. In light of the fact that he had had his head shaved absolutely clean, to look as much like the real Ernie as possible, and was reluctant to remove his hat even in restaurants and drawing rooms, Meredith brooded over that word "bewigged" for days. . . . Carolyn Coggins vows that every time he goes into Whittlesey House, John Mason Brown "turns a complete somersault to show how young he is." It was this same pixie Coggins, however, who ran a story in a *Tribune Book News* that declared (and I quote) "The morning I visited Random House, the elevator disgorged a handsome, dignified gentleman with iron-gray hair, in a frock coat and derby, who swept past with something of a clatter, for he was on roller skates. 'That's Robert Haas, our vice-president,' said Margaret, at the reception desk. Mr. Haas careened dizzily about the front office, executed a few dexterous Immelman turns, and slid gracefully into his private office on his left buttock. The last thing I saw him do was to scale his derby, with uncanny accuracy, onto a coat hook clear across the room. 'Goody,' said Margaret. 'He got it first crack today. Sometimes it takes him pretty near all morning.'" (Close quote.) . . . As Walter Winchell would say, "Hm-m-m." . . . Burling Lowrey, incidentally, thinks that John Mason Brown should change the name of his *SRL* column to "Many a Watchful First Night." . . .

BRUCE ROGERS, greatest and best loved of American typographers, has printed, and Marquardt and Company have distributed to their friends, an impeccable little B. R. volume that contains some of the memorable lines written about books. Here are a few excerpts:

To add a library to a house is to give that house a soul.—Cicero

The images of men's wits and knowledges remain in books, exempted from the wrong of time, and capable of perpetual renovation.—Francis Bacon

There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.
—Emily Dickinson

He hath never fed of the dainties that are bred of a book; he hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink; his intellect is not replenished; he is only an animal, only sensible in the duller parts.
—Shakespeare

These are the masters who instruct us without rods or ferules, without hard words and anger, without clothes or money. If you approach them, they are not asleep; if, investigating, you interrogate them, they conceal nothing; if you mistake them, they never grumble; if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you.—Richard De Bury

Of all the inanimate objects, of all men's creations, books are the nearer to us, for they contain our very thoughts, our ambitions, our indignations, our illusions, our fidelity to truth, and our persistent leaning toward error. But most of all they resemble us in their precarious hold on life.—Joseph Conrad

The man who doesn't read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them.—Sand and Spray

They borrow books they will not buy,
They have no ethics or religions;
I wish some kind Burbankian guy
Could cross my books with homing pigeons.
—Carolyn Wells

One always tends to overpraise a long book because one has got through it.—E. M. Forster

The world, you must remember, is only just becoming literate. As reading becomes more and more habitual and widespread, an ever-increasing number of people will discover that books will give them all the pleasures of social life and none of its intolerable tedium.—Aldous Huxley

If the coarse and brutal high school boys who made the Nazi bonfire could understand the power of a free man's books well enough to burn them, we in this country can understand the power of these books well enough to honor them and treat them as the things they are—the strongest and the most enduring weapons in our fight to make the world a world in which the free can live in freedom.—Archibald MacLeish. . . .

BALKAN CONDITIONS are definitely unsettled now; but they were also chaotic before the war, as this bit from Bernard Newman's new book, "Balkan Background," shows: "When I wandered about Albania in 1935, I made one journey across the high mountains

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"He *keeps* stumping 'Information, Please.'"

in the north. The authorities insisted that I should have an armed escort, as the district was 'unsettled.' In addition, two armed police accompanied me on a beat of ten miles, when they handed me over to the next pair. The newcomers had to sign a document as they took over. I discovered that it read: 'Received, one Englishman, alive!'" "Balkan Background" has just been published by Macmillan. . . . Another book on the Macmillan list is "Pride's Way," a first novel by Robert Molloy, Literary Editor of *The New York Sun*. It has been earmarked by the Literary Guild. . . . Joseph Henry Jackson is writing a one-volume history of California for Harcourt, Brace. . . . Dan Parker, sports editor of the *Mirror*, has signed a contract with Random House for a book to be called "The ABC of Horse Racing in America." It will tell how race horses and jockeys are trained, how the pari-mutuels work, the history of famous stakes like the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness, and other vital facts about the so-called "sport of kings." (First they eliminated the kings, and now they've eliminated the racing!) . . . Van Wyck Brooks and A. A. Milne are celebrating their twenty-fifth year with the same publisher, E. P. Dutton. On May 14, 1920, Dutton brought out Brooks's "Ordeal of Mark Twain," and on July 27, 1920, Milne joined the list with a volume of essays called "Not That It Matters." . . .

ALLAN ULLMAN, advertising manager of *The New York Times Book Review,* sends the following story, which would seem to indicate that he has been brooding too much about the meat shortage:

Lady medical students used to take quite a bit of ribbing from their male colleagues. At Penn Medical School there was once a gal with a particularly hardboiled outlook. Nothing feazed her. Finally a couple of her classmates decided to try to make a dent in her attitude. One of them dated her for theatre while the other secured a human arm from one of the formaldehyde barrels in the dissecting lab and painted it with luminous paint. When the one student took the girl to the theatre, the other slipped into her boarding-house room, and placed the arm on her bed. He then unscrewed the electric light bulbs, and hid himself downstairs in a closet.

The couple returned from the theatre. The girl thanked her escort and trotted upstairs to her room. Instead of leaving, her escort was joined in the hallway by his friend and the two of them waited in the dark to hear the result of their prank. After several minutes, having heard nothing, they tiptoed upstairs and silently opened her door. In the dark of the room they could see nothing except the luminous arm which seemed to be moving about on the bed. They could hear a peculiar mumbling sound mingled with the girl's heavy breathing. One of them rushed to a lamp socket, tightened the bulb, and turned on the light.

There was the girl, sitting on the bed, chewing hungrily on the arm.

BENNETT CERF.

"From where I sit"

Paul out to Virgil Partch

Our PAUL has lost a weekend to the madcap illustrator of JOE, THE WOUNDED TENNIS PLAYER.

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN

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Seeing Things

DID YOU EVER SEE SOME DREAMS WALKING?

WHAT is an elephant? It all depends. To Mr. Hoover, one thing; to King Prajadhipok, another; and to John Ringling, still another. The three blind men of the schoolroom fable will tell you that an elephant is where you happen to have touched him. "Very like a snake," said the unseeing one whose hands chanced upon the trunk. Etc. Etc.

What is a landscape? A landscape, again according to the classrooms, is where it happens to have touched you. Every freshman psychologist knows that the same bit of countryside would never look the same to a geologist, a painter, and a real estate man who took a walk together.

And what about us? Are we what we think we are? Do we see in our mirror the same person who is reflected in the eyes of those around us? As R-R-Robert Bur-r-rns put it in one of his most r-r-resolutely bagpipe-and-kiltie moments, when in church a certain insect was lousing up a certain lady's bonnet:

> O wad some power the Giftie gie us
> To see oursels as ithers see us.
> It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
> An' FOOLISH NOTION.*

You don't need to be Pirandello to get this far in the study of appearances. All this is what a pipe-puffing sleuth would have had to describe as "elementary." It would not tax the mind of Margaret O'Brien, or cause Peter Piltdown to pucker his brows.

Yet it is such commonplace pebbles of philosophy as these that Philip Barry piles up in "Foolish Notion," huffing and puffing all the while as if he were hefting Diogenes's tub. Had he approached his simple task more simply, it would have proved more ingratiating. But he must make all the faces of the straining strong man even when he has elected to lift nothing weightier than the most elementary book on dreams.

So elaborate is Mr. Barry's approach to "Foolish Notion" that neither he nor the warmer admirers of his cosmic dramas seem quite able to persuade themselves that all he is up to is asking an audience to see four dreams walking, where the song writer used to content himself with one.

Subjected to the ravages of the atom-smasher, Mr. Barry's drama breaks down into the following junior molecules. Before scanning them, it would perhaps be fairest to steal a glance at the background against which they are placed. First, the general situation, with a bow, however slight, to Enoch Arden. An actress has been deserted by her hard-drinking husband. He has gone overseas to enlist in a Scots regiment, and is supposed to have been killed in action. The actress, being as physically alive as her spouse is rumored dead, is just about to marry again, when word reaches her that her husband is returning.

Next, the setting—because the setting in this case is what the bow is to the arrow. The setting is a livingroom dominated by a reflection of the missing husband's portrait. In the theatre, of course, any portrait dominating a room is bound to be the stuff that dreams are made on. A Welsh rarebit gulped down at midnight could not produce more certain effects than such a portrait properly lighted. A nearby chair, an emptied glass, a stifled yawn, or just several long upturned gazes at the portrait—and bingo!—the house lights almost invariably go down and the sandman bobs up, as we all toddle off into dreamland.

Mr. Barry's characters resist their dreams for some time. During the whole first act, when they are still wide awake, they dedicate their energies to preparing a most successful build-up for the husband's return. By curtain-fall the husband remains a blood-brother of the Little Man Who Isn't There. He is the absentee landlord of everyone's interest. Even so, the device of keeping him off-stage, except conversationally, and having him in everyone's mind, is a good one, and always has been.

The whole second act finds Mr. Barry journeying in the Land of Nod. One by one, his characters nestle down in front of the missing husband's portrait. To the tune of off-stage bagpipes, and with lights being lowered and raised like windows in a tenement courtyard, they doze. And having dozed, they visualize his return in terms of their individual dreams. We see the husband's homecoming as it is dreamed, first, by his would-be successor; next, by the lecherous old professor of dramatics who is his father-in-law; and then through the melodramatic eyes of the little girl who is his adopted daughter.

—*SRL drawing by Winn.*
Tallulah Bankhead

Mr. Barry's third act is only fifty per cent siesta. More bagpipes are heard. The switchboard is subjected to further orchestration. Then, by all the rights of stellar billing, comes the evening's final snooze, when the actress enjoys her highly histrionic nightmare of her husband's homecoming. Hers is the dream to climax the others.

Thereafter the lights fluctuate again, and we are back in reality. The actuality is as different from the dreams as all four dreams have differed from one another. The husband returns, in the admitted flesh this time. Doubtless to prove that he, too, has been dreaming, he announces conveniently that he is in love with the extra girl in the cast. Thus the actress is enabled to marry the man she had planned to marry in Act One. And thus Mr. Barry is enabled to drop his curtain.

But to drop it on what? This remains the evening's only perplexing question. Certainly Mr. Barry has added little to anyone's awareness of life, and less to anyone's knowledge of dreams. All he tells us within a frame of pure make-believe is that no two people would ever dream of the same situation in the same way.

If Mr. Barry's approach to his materials had been franker, if he had admitted he was going to indulge in such a game of "Let's Pretend" as has not been seen hereabouts since Lotta Crabtree was a baby, the resulting Equity carnival might have been more fun in its own rights. But Mr. Barry insists upon distributing all the costumes needed for each of his four dream sequences as if he were about to exchange a professional secret with Einstein.

When Alec Templeton let us hear

**FOOLISH NOTION, a play by Philip Barry. Presented by the Theatre Guild. Directed by John C. Wilson. Setting by Jo Mielziner. With Tallulah Bankhead, Henry Hull, Donald Cook, Joan Shepard, Aubrey Mather, Mildred Dunnock, etc. At the Martin Beck.*

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"The Music Goes Round and Round" as Mozart, Johann Strauss, and Handel might have written it, he was varying a theme much as Mr. Barry has done. Part of the fun of Mr. Templeton's brilliant performance, however, was sprung from the simple fact that he joyfully admitted what he was up to. He brought all of his high talents to parody for parody's unsweet sake. Although the dream music in Mr. Barry's play goes round and round, and comes out here and comes out there, Mr. Barry is not content to work merely as a satirist. Instead of looking upon his dream sequences as the exercises they should be in contrasted writing and acting styles, he appears to take them seriously.

Technically it is always fun to have a scene played with variations. Any revue producer knows this. So do theatre-goers who remember the countless plays, such as "The Eyes of Youth" and "Ten Minute Alibi," which have done this very thing. But Mr. Barry is not willing to let his tricks stand on their own acting or writing merits as tricks. He would have us believe that they mean something; that they even make sense.

Being by Mr. Barry, "Foolish Notion" cannot fail to bear some of the felicitous stamps of his authorship. The Barry touch is upon it—sometimes in ways delectable, sometimes in ways regrettable, and at its best in the young girl's dream. His play has its fair quota of amusing Barryesque lines; its percentage of over-mannered ones too. However obscure it may choose to be, or stilted as this or that scene may prove, it is nonetheless the work of a man who knows how to write, even if this time he does not seem to know precisely what he is writing, or why.

If, as a script, "Foolish Notion" turns to be something of a Sleepy Hollow, it is nonetheless an actors' field-day. In order to keep pace both with reality and the ever changing dreams, Henry Hull and Tallulah Bankhead are asked to give five different performances during the evening's course, and to slip into an equal number of costumes.

If Mr. Hull is left a little breathless by his constant quick changes, Miss Bankhead revels in hers. She is one of the truly extraordinary performers of our stage and screen. Even when Mr. Barry appears to have forgotten her, no one else can put her out of mind.

Miss Bankhead's range is as wide as her powers are exceptional. She is as superb at straight playing as she is at spoofing. When her voice goes slumming in her boots, it is one of the surest invitations to laughter that our theatre knows.

Miss Bankhead can change her moods as swiftly as a chameleon adapts itself to colors. She is the world's only volcano to have been dressed by Mainbocher. She is worth seeing in any play, because she is a whole theatre in herself. The fault is not hers, or the Theatre Guild's (which has given "Foolish Notion" a capable production), or Mr. Mielziner's (who has set it well), if Mr. Barry's new play makes some snoozing possible on the wrong side of the footlights.

JOHN MASON BROWN.

SCREEN

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"WAIT for ME"
Spoken in English. Prod. in U.S.S.R.
A love story vibrant with the deep emotions of our time!
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April 1st to April 29th
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RUSSIAN BALLET
Ballet Theatre
PREMIERE, $6 to $1.20. Eves. thereafter, $4.80 to $1.20. Mats. April 5, 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 28, $1.20 to $3.60.

STAGE

OPENING SAT. EVE. MARCH 31 MAIL ORDERS AND SEATS NOW

Eddie DOWLING and Louis J. SINGER present
LAURETTE TAYLOR AND EDDIE DOWLING
in THE GLASS MENAGERIE

a new play by Tennessee Williams
with JULIE HAYDON and ANTHONY ROSS
Setting and lighting by JO MIELZINER • Original music composed by Paul Bowles
Staged by Mr. Dowling and Margo Jones
PLAYHOUSE W. 48 St. BR. 9-3565 | Op'g. night—Orch. $7.20, Balc. $4.20, $3.00, $2.40 & $1.80. Thereafter Orch. $4.20, Balc. $3.60, $3.00, $1.80, $1.20. Mats. Wed. & Sat. Orch. $3.60, Balc. $3.00, $2.40, $1.80 & $1.20 incl. tax

STAGE

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ELLIOTT NUGENT • BETTY FIELD • AUDREY CHRISTIE
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Soldier's Wife
ROSE FRANKEN'S COMEDY HIT
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THE APPLEGREEN CAT
or
THE AMETHYST SPECTACLES
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New PAT ABBOTT murder mystery

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VOODOO AND MURDER IN THE FRENCH QUARTER OF NEW ORLEANS

Aristocrats and scoundrels in the famous Creole section of New Orleans amid the strange confusions of a war-time boom . . . and a series of murders which baffle the police until Lieutenant Pat Abbott and his lovable but slightly rattle-brained wife, Jean, discover one of the bodies and take a hand in tracking down the murderer.

$2.00

A RANDOM HOUSE MYSTERY

Poetry for the Microphone

Radio Offers Poets Their Greatest Opportunity

LUTHER WEAVER

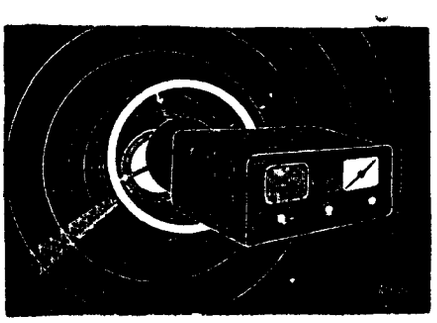
THIS piece is not for the few; it is for the many who like poetry, and for those who write it, and for those who produce it on the air.

Never in man's singing history have poets had such an opportunity to read their lines or have them read before so vast an audience. Shakespeare would have liked the Radio. How he would have blended the wind's howl and the majesty of music and the regality of words into a unity greater even than that achieved in the Elizabethan hey-day in which as a man from Stratford he lived and worked and died!

His stage truly would not have been the Globe theatre, but the whole world, for radio would have taken his plays for the listening ear to outpost and hamlet and town, over steppes and jungle and prairie, wherever man was keeping soul and body together.

Radio is the perfect medium for bringing into our living rooms poetry alive and lively, by means of the human voice reading it aloud. Television will not enhance that beauty; it cannot make the poetic line more lovely. Carl Sandburg, strumming his "geetar" and chanting of "a sky of tomorrows" is this century's "spittin' image" of the medieval minstrel who went up and down the Old World countryside playing and singing. His poems are "at home" on the air because they are the conversation of "the people yes."

Archibald MacLeish, in those tragic months and years before we could bring ourselves to believe that brutes were abroad in this world, MacLeish, in the role of spokesman, a poet's birthright, pointed out the reason for this nation to bestir itself. In fact, his "The Fall of the City," presented over the Columbia network April 11, 1937, was the first outright attack on fascism. And "The Fall of the City" was the first verse play ever written for radio. Mind you, that was in 1937—



and how many have there been since? Not many.

Four years later, on July 4, 1941, the Blue network presented Stephen Vincent Benét's "Listen to the People," a dramatic argument in common speech that "people oughtn't to be pushed around."

Then came the war, and for D-Day, for the invasion of the Normandy coast, Edna St. Vincent Millay had a poem ready. Broadcast by NBC, that poem, "Poem and Prayer for an Invading Army," went into living rooms throughout a nation that was literally hanging over its radios in those hours of overwhelming suspense and courage and faith that on the calendar was June 6, 1944.

But this is not a history of radio poetry. What I am trying to point out is that poets—and they neither wear long hair nor are queer—have an opportunity in radio that should spur them into enlightening and entertaining activity.

You and I in our own time have only to listen with awareness to understand in some measure at least how many persons in America have a liking for poetry, despite strange antecedents which held and still may continue to hold that poetry is something no "successful" American has anything to do with. Consider the Chinese whose statesmen write poetry as a matter of routine qualification, and the fulfilment of an old heritage.

Nowadays radio is taking poetry to millions and those millions apparently like it for itself and for themselves. Certainly never in all the centuries since man first began putting his best words into their best form, namely, poetry, has it received so much and such widespread attention as in the past twenty-five years, the period that spans radio's existence. But what have America's poets been doing about it? Have they been doing anything? To this writer, the exceptions only prove the point.

What if your work never gets beyond the local radio station, never reaches network presentation? It still can be worthy, it still can be good. Where we who happen to be poets fail —and the same may be said of other writers—is that too frequently we are deaf to the fact that radio and its use of the spoken word is our perfect

(*Continued on page* 40)

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Houghton Mifflin Company's Poetry Fellowship Award

Ten years ago Houghton Miffin Company adapted to book publishing the principle of financing literary work by means of Fellowships. This year, to mark the anniversary, a special award for poetry was offered.

The total number of manuscripts received in the competition, which closed on March 1, was in excess of 800, and the level of ability and interest is high.

The entries have come from all parts of the country — West Coast, Midwest, Deep South, every section of the Atlantic Seaboard — and from Europe and the Antipodes. A substantial proportion are from members of the Armed Forces.

The reading is progressing as rapidly as possible and the judges, Mrs. Katherine White, Horace Gregory and Ferris Greenslet, expect to announce their decision not later than June 1.

The winner will receive a prize of $1,000 in addition to the usual royalties.

★

Have you read this year's Fellowship winner, LOOKING FOR A BLUEBIRD by Joseph Wechsberg? The *Chicago Daily News* calls it "glorious entertainment."

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY PUBLISHERS

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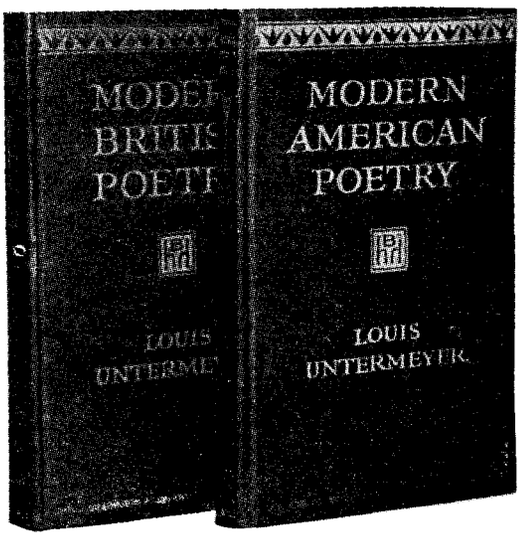
Louis Untermeyer's ant

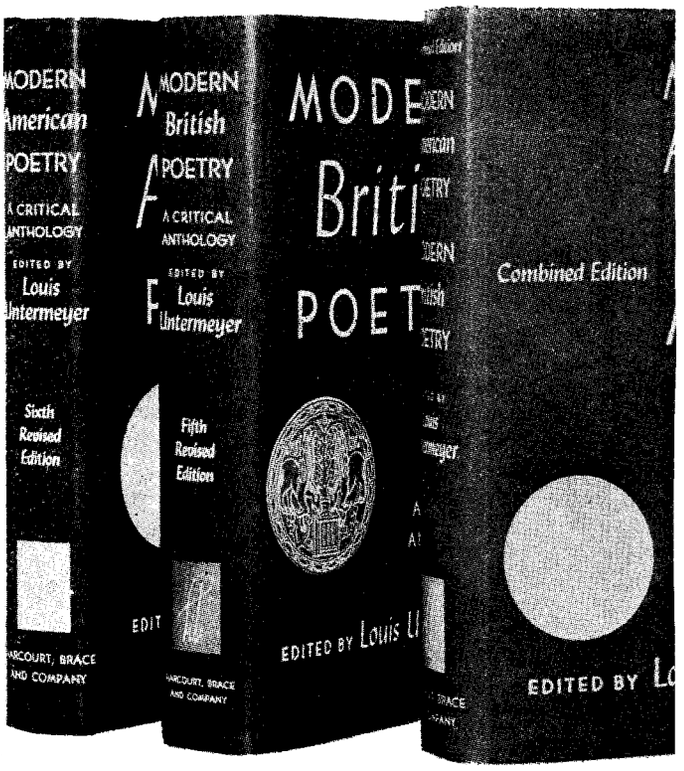


MODERN BRITISH POETRY

1st edition published August, 1920. Included 79 poets, 177 poems, 234 pages.

MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

1st edition published December, 1919. Included 90 poets, 132 poems, 170 pages.



MODERN AMERICAN PO

Sixth revised edition. Including 797 poems by 93 p
to Muriel Rukeyser. Biographical and critical notes.

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Fifth revised edition. Including 784 poems by 85 p
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COMBINED ED

HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

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ology idea is
wenty-five years old

OVER in the left hand corner there are a couple of books which, despite their modest appearance, caused no small furor among schools back in 1920.

Indignant teachers all over the country protested against using the books in class rooms, saying that Robert Frost was "common," Edgar Lee Masters "vulgar," and Carl Sandburg "certainly no poet." Moreover, it was hard enough to get students to read poetry in the first place, and how could they be expected to read "poetry" that sounded the way people talked! But Louis Untermeyer and his publishers felt differently about modern poetry. They believed that if students could get accustomed to reading poetry written in familiar language, the older masters would then be understood more readily. A few colleges included questions concerning modern poetry in their entrance exams and gradually students and teachers began to listen to the new voices.

Our most famous contemporary American and British poets today are represented in those first two volumes. Besides Sandburg, Masters, and Frost there appeared in the American volume Edwin Arlington Robinson, Amy Lowell, Vachel Lindsay, Sara Teasdale, Ezra Pound, "H.D.," Edna St. Vincent Millay, Stephen Vincent Benét, and many others. In the British volume appeared Robert Bridges, William Ernest Henley, A. E. Housman, William Butler Yeats, Walter de la Mare, John Masefield, James Joyce, Robert Graves, and others.

Now in their sixth and fifth editions respectively, these anthologies have grown with the times and, in fact, have consistently led the way in discovering and establishing new poets. MODERN AMERICAN POETRY now includes Kenneth Fearing, Kenneth Patchen, Marya Zaturenska, E. E. Cummings, and Horace Gregory, to name but a few. MODERN BRITISH POETRY has added Dylan Thomas, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, and others.

Yet the original idea behind the anthology remains the same. As Louis Untermeyer wrote in his first introduction—"Realizing that this brief gathering is not so much a summary as an introduction, still it is hoped that this collection will draw the reader on to a closer consideration of the poets here included . . . The purpose of such an anthology must always be to arouse an interest rather than to satisfy a curiosity."

DERN
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ETRY
om Walt Whitman
s, 712 pages, $3.75

ETRY
rom Thomas Hardy
s, 506 pages, $3.50

ION
1218 pages, $4.75

Books by the following poets are published by Harcourt, Brace and Company

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LOUISE McNEILL
ARCHIBALD MacLEISH
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY
THOMAS MOULT
HERBERT READ
W. R. RODGERS
CARL SANDBURG
JAN STRUTHER
LOUIS UNTERMEYER
ROBERT PENN WARREN

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Robert Frost and the Man of Uz

A MASQUE OF REASON. By Robert Frost. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1945. 23 pp. $2.

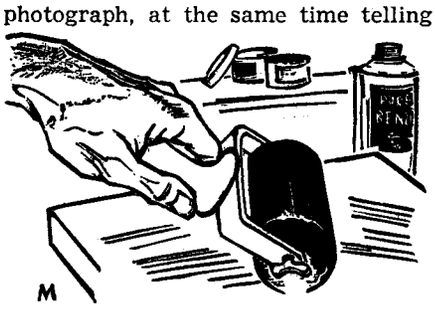
Reviewed by LEONARD BACON

THIS is a very strange poem, which can be read in half an hour, though it will take most of us much longer than that to understand it. This is not unnatural, for the work is a continuation of another poem, which many have found difficult of interpretation for the last three thousand years. The final line of "A Masque of Reason" is as follows:

"Here endeth chapter forty-three of Job." There is at least as much mystery in this chapter as in any of the preceding forty-two.

Mr. Frost's hand is as skilful and sure as ever. And there is something aromatic in the work, Sabaean odors from the shore of an Araby along which he has not always chosen to cruise. Nor is there any falling off in his power of making what we take for granted glow with unfamiliar fluorescence. This has always been a mark of fine poets. In spite of the studied colloquial style, or perhaps because of it, the poem is bound to take hold of anyone who will pay appropriate attention. Now for the particulars.

Job and his wife Thyatira, whose works are greater than her patience (see Revelations, 2., 19.), lie at their ease in one of the oases of the Desert of Eternity. Presently they see God caught in his burning bush (or is it a Christmas tree, or the tree of Alexius Comnenus?), from which he quickly frees himself. God seizes the opportunity to apologize in form for any inconvenience Job may have suffered in the past and excuses Himself on the ground that together Job and He demonstrated the truth that reason cannot make a connection between what men do and what they endure. Job, by his competent assistance, has relieved God of the theoretical necessity of rewarding good and evil in kind, a great convenience for any deity, the world being what it is. But this proves to be merely the statement of the official point of view. Job and Thyatira (the latter much exercised because this is an androcentric universe) demolish the position, Job because he wants a reasoned and well-ordered system ("The artist in me cries out for design"), and Thyatira because she feels that Job has been put upon to no reasonable purpose. Although Thyatira sleeps a good deal during the debate, gradually Job and she extract from their Creator the reluctant admission that He gave Satan power over the just merely to show off the superiority of his supporters. This reminds Job of the Adversary, who by invitation joins the party, appearing "like a sapphire wasp that flickers mica wings." The guest appears on the whole greatly to interest Thyatira, who twits him unmercifully but helps God and Job save him from a tendency which is running away with him. At the end of the poem Thyatira poses the three protagonists for a group photograph, at the same time telling



them that it will be better to look pleasant, whatever they may have settled, if anything. This sounds farcical in the paraphrase, but somehow it is not in the poem.

If the reviewer understands the parable, which is open to question, Mr. Frost's meaning is much like the late Arthur Ryder's, as set down in his brief, grim, diverting, and powerful "Job": "Evil is not a problem but a fact." In spite of the dialectic sport the metaphysicians have had in and around the subject, it would appear that all the contradictions might be liquidated, if the philosophers actually took pains about definitions. The clash between fate and free will, we are informed, ceases to trouble when the controversialists realize that they don't know enough to define either except provisionally. Mr. Frost has some pertinent remarks:

> . . . Science goes self-superseding on.
> Look how far we've left the current science
> Of Genesis behind. The wisdom there though,
> Is just as good as when I uttered it.

It is too. And it may be observed that those generalizations which remain valid are seldom connected with the dogmas of sects. Rather, for the most part, they are statements about inescapable experience and concern the sweat of the brow and the eating of bread. What has been called the embroidery of the theologians is produced later in monasteries and universities by comfortably situated persons, who enhance the dignity of their order by introducing intellectual refinements of the subtlest kind and of no importance whatever. It is not denied that such occupations stimulate the mind. The Neoplatonists and the Scholastics are not wholly lost motion, but their activities look pretty nebulous beside the less ambitious but more exact operations of the mathematician and the physicist, which are not asymptotic to the wisdom alluded to by Mr. Frost.

For all it's brevity and beauty this is a difficult book. And, as hinted above, the reviewer is by no means convinced that he has read it aright or interpreted it properly. He is, however, of the opinion that men of many kinds will be charmed and excited by the wit and the grace of mind which play over the pathetic spectacle of finite logic at her Psyche task, forever trying to force the Infinite into nice, reasonable, satisfactory, digestible categories. The reviewer has had occasion before this to remark that Mr. Frost is not only a very wonderful poet but a very wise man. Nothing in this little book has suggested to him any reason for receding from the position.

Jungle Flowers

By Kenneth Porter

THE staggered double-row of iron stalks
sprouting from grey cement of city-walks

bore tight green buds. I turned away my head
a moment—saw them blooming fiery red.

So in the blinking of a cindered eye
had early May leapt into mid-July

bewildering. . . . I viewed the Neon signs
draping the building-fronts in jagged vines

and found it then not strange that, in this jungle
of great stone trees arranged in ordered tangle,

where herding traffic squalls and snarls and pants
and men swarm by like huge disturbed white ants,

amid this feverish haste and tropic simmer,
only a breath should sever spring and summer.

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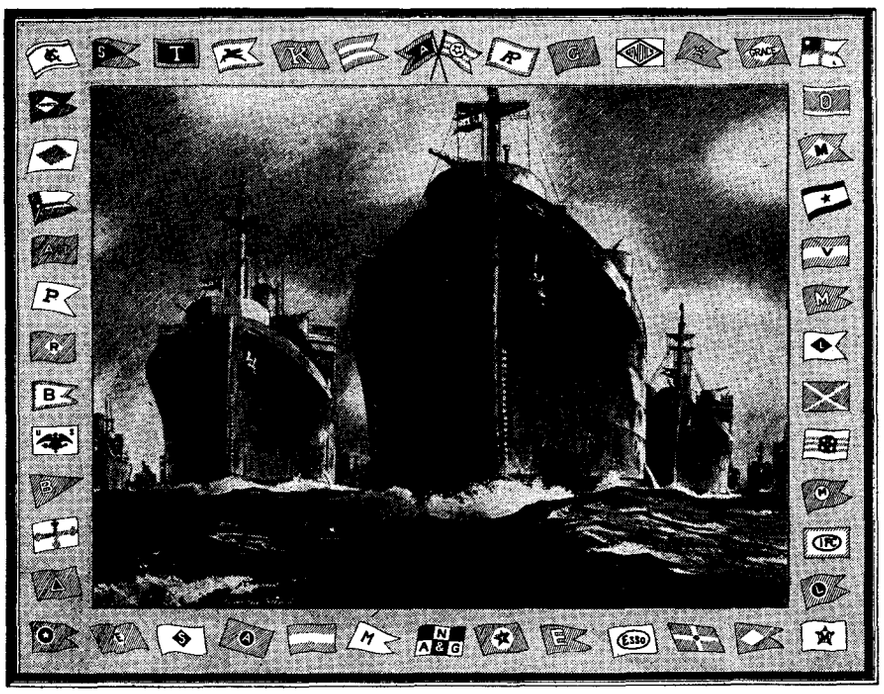
WHEN YOUR SHIPS COME IN
will you sail 'em, sell 'em, or scrap 'em?



Outward bound . . . *a miracle!*

There she sails . . . a miracle in steam . . . the mightiest merchant fleet ever to fly the flag of a single nation . . .

Count the ships—count the tonnage—count the *cost!* 5,500 ships, 54,500,000 tons. A fleet five times as big as our pre-war merchant marine! Bigger than all the pre-war fleets of Britain, the U. S., Japan, Norway and Germany combined!

And they're yours! You, through your government, own nearly nine-tenths of them. You bought ships instead of new cars, or vacuum cleaners, or radios—with your War Bonds and your taxes. Yes, you're part owner of a miracle!

Homeward bound . . . *a headache!*

Coasters and tankers, C-types, Libertys and Victorys, the greatest mass of cargo carriers the world has ever seen . . . and someday they'll be rolling home, *empty!*

That's when the headache starts. Remember how our World War I merchant marine rusted away in forgotten backwaters? You said then, "That must not happen again!"

Well, once more your ships are coming in . . . *What are you going to do with them?* Sail them? Sell them? Scrap them? Save them? Or share them? Think well before you answer!

It isn't one fleet, *it's two!*

The inefficient fleet is larger . . . 7½ million tons of over-age and foreign-built vessels . . . 26 million tons of Liberty ships . . . all second choice ships for normal times. (The Libertys are the finest mass-produced cargo-carriers ever designed; they've done a swell war job. But they cost too much to operate, are too slow for competitive post-war trade.)

The efficient fleet is smaller . . . 2,200 ships of 24 million tons. Victorys, tankers, C-types (C-1, C-2, C-3), plus coasters and passenger-cargo ships. Fast, modern, economical, they're the finest ships afloat.

It isn't one problem, *it's four!*

1. The personal problem. The U. S. merchant fleet is all tied up to your job, your future, another world war.

For how much America exports and imports, **and in whose bottoms,** will affect postwar employment all through U. S. industry—standards of living all over the world—pressures for or against another world war in nations across all the oceans that wash our shores.

2. The national problem. National security demands a U. S. merchant fleet immediately available to transport men and material in every emergency. The Navy looks to the merchant marine for trained officers and men.

But how big a fleet do we need?

And what about subsidies to operate it? U. S.-built ships cost twice as much as the same ships foreign-built. American crews get higher wages. How much are you willing to be taxed to help overcome these higher costs?

3. The international problem. Some of our allies depend on maritime income far more than we do—and when the war ends half their fleets will be gone.

Shall we sell them ships from our *efficient* fleet (they won't want or buy Libertys)? Shall we help them recover from the war by setting them up in competition with us again on the seven seas?

Or shall we keep all our good ships, and try to hold our mastery of the merchant seas, even if this makes our allies poorer and leaves them fewer dollars to spend for U. S. goods?

4. The surplus problem. What can we do with the *inefficient* fleet . . . the ships that nobody wants?

Shall we scrap them, or "lend-lease" them, or leave them to rust as a "strategic reserve"?

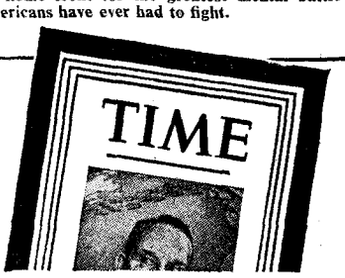
TIME believes America's greatest need, now and in the coming years, is for the sovereign people to make up their minds and speak them out on these pressing problems of our time.

To do so, citizens must keep themselves *informed.* So in advertisements like this TIME is seeking to encourage reading, questioning, argument and straight, hard thinking.

For TIME's own future is unalterably linked to a U. S. citizenry deeply concerned about public affairs—to a nation insistent upon seeking the truth and learning from recorded experience.

This is the ninth advertisement of a series appearing in newspapers and magazines from coast to coast. Its purpose is to get more Americans thinking. For 22 years that has been the job the editors of TIME have been trying to do in their editorial space. Now TIME harnesses the force of advertising to the same objective—to prepare the home front for the greatest mental battle Americans have ever had to fight.

TIME
The weekly NEWSMAGAZINE



This announcement has just appeared in the following newspapers and magazines: **NEWSPAPERS**—**New York** *Herald Tribune, Times, Sun, Wall Street Journal and Journal of Commerce;* **Chicago** *News, Sun, and Journal of Commerce;* **Washington, D. C.** *Post;* **Philadelphia** *Inquirer;* **Boston** *Herald Traveler and Christian Science Monitor;* **Cleveland** *Plain Dealer;* **Los Angeles** *News;* **San Francisco** *Chronicle;* **Baltimore** *Sun;* **St. Louis** *Globe Democrat;* **Pittsburgh** *Post Gazette;* **Milwaukee** *Journal;* **Minneapolis** *Times;* **Seattle** *Star;* **Atlanta** *Journal;* **Portland** *Oregonian.* **MAGAZINES**—*TIME, LIFE, Harpers, Saturday Review of Literature, American Exporter, Editor & Publisher—and marine, naval and export magazines.*

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The Thankless Muse

PERENNIAL. By Oliver St. John Gogarty. Baltimore: Contemporary Poetry. 1944. 48 *pp.* $2.

THE SUMMER LANDSCAPE. By Rolfe Humphries. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1944. 50 *pp.* $1.75.

THE SOUND I LISTENED FOR. By Robert Francis. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1944. 77 *pp.* $2.

POEMS. By Jon Beck Shank. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1945. 85 *pp.* $2.

SELECTED POEMS. By August Derleth. Prairie City: The Press of James A. Decker. 1945. 235 *pp.* $2.50.

NO ARCH, NO TRIUMPH. By John Malcolm Brinnin. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1945. 73 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by RAYMOND HOLDEN

IT is perhaps inevitable that a poet considering the work of other poets should find in those he considers the same voids and imperfections which he finds in his own work. A poet deeply concerned with poetry, who looks eagerly at all poetry as it appears, may take from what he sees a sense of disappointment which a lay reader of verse might miss. I offer what I have to say of these six poets, therefore, with all humility.

The sense of disappointment, in varying degrees, comes from all six—not that there is not talent here, not that there is no evidence of honesty, of skill, of perception even. It is disappointment to this reader at least to find that in this varied cross-section of the American poets' working field (Mr. Gogarty here writes like an adopted American) there should be continuing evidence of the long-evident fact that American poets, when young, take themselves too seriously and, when mature, not seriously enough. Poetry in our civilization is still, even among professional poets to whom the craft is bread, margarine, and day's work, a whisper not a language. The force behind it seems either to embarrass, frighten, or put on the defensive the man it possesses. Poetry with us, therefore, is a letter to a friend, not the proclamation of a prophet, a letter, in many cases, to a lobbyist. The reason for this is not immediately apparent and there is not space here to explain this reviewer's view of it. Let us, then, look at the evidence.

Oliver Gogarty who, though not the most talented, is the most practised of the six, as the ease and music of his charming, if overlong, "Leda and the Swan" indicates, is apparently content to be the accepted literary man using his gifts, like fingers clinging to a branch, to support him where he is rather than to advance him. His book is worthy though often wordy, its range is slight and its emphasis only occasionally strong. "Perennial" suggests that his stature is something less than we had supposed it, as if the hero of Joyce and the confidant of Yeats were tired and satisfied to be so.

Rolfe Humphries, in spite of the meagre volume of his published work (or perhaps because of it), stands out as the most finished and significant poet of the six. "The Summer Landscape" has passion and sincerity. It gives evidence of that deep struggle within, that tumult and pride, which is a poet's stone and timber. If it keeps the distillation of that struggle to a level of self-pity and self-concern it does so perhaps because a poet cannot be concerned with his mind's peripheral world until he has resolved and classified the elements of his personal core. Mr. Humphries is a genuine poet and he has noticeably grown in stature. He will be recognized as one of the nation's first lyricists—which he has been, without recognition, for some time—when he has achieved that synthesis of personality and project

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which is a poet's most difficult and most necessary achievement.

Robert Francis ("The Sound I Listened For") is also a lyricist, in the school of Frost, whose talent is great and whose accomplishment is small. He has a quality of his own, although his approach is that of Frost. His idiom is somewhat on the Frostian side, too, and his use of restraint and paradox often produces the bright and satisfying effect which many of Frost's lyrics achieve. The only trouble is that when you study the effect you realize that the pleasure it gives you is more the result of your friendly feeling for a man who looks at things in that way than of its poetic creation.

Jon Beck Shank is a new discovery and his ability is considerable. Some of the poems in his book were written during his service as a soldier in the present war. They are interesting and sensitive. They seem, in their traces of lingering pomposity merging with some later (or perhaps earlier?) gaucheries of artistic self-consciousness, to indicate that Mr. Shank, like all true poets, is still groping for his own personal form of expression. When he finds it he will be worth watching. At present he is interesting rather than satisfying.

August Derleth, ten years Mr. Shank's senior (35) is a very prolific writer in both prose and verse. I am sorry to say that much as I admire his versatility and industry, his poems, which suggest both Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters, leave me with the feeling that here is a man who is being defeated by his own fluency, who finds it so easy to write that he is always writing and never thinking about writing. It is during the hours when poets think about writing (preferably thinking about it with distaste) that the muse lays her largest and most fertile eggs.

John Malcolm Brinnin's "No Arch, No Triumph," is an improvement on "The Garden is Political" which was, I believe, his first book. Mr. Brinnin apparently belongs to the very exacting school which verges upon the belief that poetry should be more or less non-representational, should create something apart from the reality with which even poets are compelled to live. This is a perfectly sound belief and has served as dogma for some of the best modern poets. It is, however, a very exacting doctrine and one which demands a great deal of the poet. Mr. Brinnin appears to regard it as a short cut to distinction, which it can hardly be, rather than as a perilous and never-ending journey to the edges of an understanding of that cumulative mystery of mind which is both the crown and commonalty of the human race.

To return to what I said at the outset: it seems to me that these six poets indicate that what, if anything, is the matter with American poetry, is that its practitioners are either tired, shy, afraid, impatient, or too easily satisfied.

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Poets in This Number

LT. (J.G.) JESSE STUART is the Kentucky poet who first achieved fame with "Man With a Bull-Tongue Plow" (poems) in 1934. Since then he has written poetry and novels.

FLORENCE CONVERSE is one of our most distinguished American women writers. Her novel "Long Will" is a classic in *Everyman's Library*. Now over seventy, she is still writing with all the energy and command of forty years ago. Her "Collected Poems" were published in 1937.

LT. (J.G.) SIMONS ROOF, U.S.N.R., is a young Southerner, born in Charleston, S. C., and educated in North Carolina, a product of Chapel Hill.

NORMA LAY is from Elmira, N. Y., and DON GORDON from Los Angeles, California, while ERIC WILSON BARKER now lives in San Francisco. They are comparative newcomers.

KENNETH PORTER was born in central Kansas forty years ago. He took his Master's degree at Minnesota, became a Doctor of Philosophy at Harvard, and published seven years ago a fine volume of Kansas poems, "The High Plains." He has also written prose, teaches at Vassar College, and has a new prose work on a saliently American theme in progress.

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Quartet

FLIGHT ABOVE CLOUD. By John Pudney. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1944. 54 *pp.* $2.

THE DEVIOUS WAY. By Theodore Morrison. New York: The Viking Press. 1944. 134 *pp.* $2.

THE WALLS DO NOT FALL. By H. D. New York: The Oxford University Press. 1944. 48 *pp.* $2.

TAKE THEM, STRANGER. By Babette Deutsch. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1944. 72 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by SARA HENDERSON HAY

JOHN PUDNEY is a Squadron Leader in the R.A.F. on active duty. Of the poems in his new volume, "Flight Above Cloud," he says "they are only songs—not written in tranquillity but in odd places and corners never far from the sound of aircraft engines." To describe them as "only songs" is far too modest an appraisal. They are poems rich in feeling, simply and directly communicated, vivid in the immediacy of their emotion. They are neither obscure nor affected. Without being at all imitative or derivative, there is something of Housman and W. W. Gibson in the author's economy of phrase, and like them he neither sentimentalizes nor romanticizes the theme of men at war. There are pity and irony in these poems, and anger, not for man himself but for stupidity and circumstance. He writes of his companions, of

> flying with Americans in their B-Seventeen,
> Weapon-bright ship of the new world, the steady
> Majestic job, I saw my England green . . .
> of bomb dumps
>
> These patient bombs await
> As grocer's goods on shelves
> A hand which will relate
> Them to ourselves.
>
> Death in such ranks and rows
> Never more neatly schemes
> To stun the heart that knows,
> The eye that dreams.

of a love for home and country and family which is warm like a garment worn "blood-deep under the skin." He has the poet's eye and the poet's attention to the things about him. It is good to find, in these days when so much obscure and pretentious writing is being done in the name of poetry, a poet who is not ashamed to be caught using the old forms and the conventional lyric measures. Mr. Pudney does not consider himself hampered by rhyme and meter, he uses them, as good poets have always done, in his own way, stamping them with his own personality and coloring them with his private passion.

"The Devious Way," by Theodore

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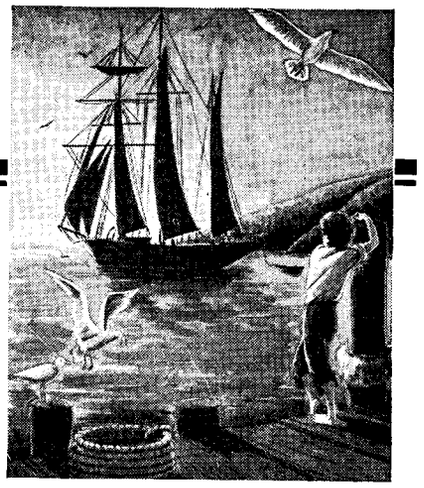
Morrison, is a brief novel in verse. It is the story of a girl's search for love, of the conflict between a first love and a more mature passion, of an attempt to integrate a personality which hurts itself and others at every turn. It is probably a personal bias, but the modern novel in verse so seldom turns out to be successfully one thing or the other. Poetry itself can deal with the most involved and complicated psychological reactions, as can prose itself, but when poetry goes over to the field of the contemporary novel the sound of its own voice sometimes gets into its way. Mr. Morrison here delves into the psychology of a confused, unhappy girl, and does his best to make Christina's singularly selfish actions understandable. But there are too many gaps, too much hurrying over, and as a character I did not find her particularly convincing; also the brevity of the book made the plot seem crowded into too small quarters. There are passages of sheer poetry which are vivid and beautiful, and the lyrics interspersed are moving and memorable. But I cannot say that as a whole "The Devious Way" either gripped my interest as a story about people, or satisfied me as a poem.

Hilda Doolittle was a charter member of that group known as the Imagists which came into being during the poetic renaissance of the second decade of this century. Their creed was, roughly: to use the language of common speech, but to employ the *exact* word, never the merely ornamental; to create new rhythms and freedom of form by which the individuality of the poet could be better expressed; to allow absolute freedom of subject; to present an image, rather than dealing in vague generalities; to produce poetry that is hard and clever, never blurred or indefinite, and finally to believe that concentration is the very essence of poetry. That these tenets should have seemed revolutionary at the time appears strange now, considering that not one of them runs counter to the traditions of great poetry. Since H. D. was one of the most outstanding adherents of this creed, one might expect her poetry to be direct, communicative, never abstract or bafflingly obscure. Her new book, "The Walls Do Not Fall," seems however to have departed at least from the language of common speech, and from terms or imagery of universal experience. Exquisite and chiseled and subtly metrical as her poems are, they seem too remote from the common experience. Even though the present poems are about the war and its impact on the physical and spiritual body of humanity, the terms the poet employs are not those which we recognize as our own. She turns instead to gods and goddesses, to Amen-Ra, Osir-



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is, to Greek and ancient Egyptian mythology and symbology. Concentrated her poetry certainly is, but concentrated to a sort of personal shorthand which this reader, for one, found very difficult and at times impossible to understand. H. D.'s admirers, and there are many, will find in the present book the undeniable imprint of a brilliant personality. There will be more people, I think, who will turn from them because they are too highly stylized, too foreign in their allusion, too coldly remote.

Babette Deutsch's "Take Them, Stranger," is not the simple lyric poetry which he who runs may read. But read carefully, the essential simplicity and clarity of its emotion is apparent. These are the poems of a woman deeply stirred, deeply aware of the tumult and violence of the times, but speaking without confusion and without haste. The prevailing note is sombre; not a personal melancholy or a loud crying out, but a recognition of grief and the anguish which overshadows even a day when "the sun tastes like April." Miss Deutsch is not resigned; rather she believes in the durability of man's hope which will live out whatever comes. If the present pain has no cure,

Suffice it for our part
That fate gave man the heart
To suffer and endure.

She is a sure craftsman, with a technique at once disciplined and flexible. She uses both conventional patterns of verse and the looser unrhymed or irregularly rhyming line. I found many poems in the book memorable, but particularly "Solitude" which I quote for its precise and sensitively beautiful evocation of more than mood:

SOLITUDE

What is it comes at evening into the room?
When you are alone, when muted lamplight glosses
The wood, yellowing the page whose notes
Blackly assert a deaf man's agony:
The music that his ears cannot receive
Ever. Ever. What is here now?
What does the silence say?
And the books gravely coloring the walls,
Their wisdom shut between boards, behind glass,
Like an anonymous exile without passport.
What is it breathes
So the lamp flickers like a candle flame?
The music beats, as soundless as a heart,
Touching your heartlessness.
And the room widens to receive the night,
The shut page sparkles like a tear,
The deaf man's agony becomes your joy,
Death littles. O what clear
Crystal
Forms at evening in the lonely room,
The lover, like an enemy, can break!

The Guinea Shore

By Sgt. Hargis Westerfield

GRIMLY Goodenough Island stands
To starboard: black back of a monster,
White jungle mists; the mainland
Lifts up formlessly blue:
Unknown New Guinea, prehistoric land
Where men fight darkly. Veterans
Lean by the rail in leaf-marked
Tigerish jungle suits, faces yellowed
By atabrin, or black with the sun
Or scarred by jungle rot: grim men
Who go North again.

And Replacements fresh from the States
Shudder in fear: What unknown nameless
Suffering the flesh must endure,
Death in the swamps under machine-guns
A man never sees. Goodenough Island,
Black back of a monster, mist-marked,
Grimly stands up to starboard. Replacement grins
Back at black challenging mountains,
Blue Guinea Shore: fighter's grin
Grimmer than a jungle threat;
His head lifts to the fearless look
Of the scar-faced veterans:
God let me be some day
One with these
Grim men who go North again.

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Saturday Review

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Masters's "The New World"

(Continued from page 15)

How these Plutarchian men made progress towards achieving this is told with elevation and great vigor. Afterwards comes the story of the battles between the states.

In all the story of the human happenings we do not lose sight of the land itself with the great spaces that in themselves are a plea to man to desist from his inherited greeds and violences. A time comes when the poet of "The New World" becomes not only bitter but scathing; it is when he records the Spanish-American War and what led up to it. It was treason to the Radiant Land, he considers, to go outside its borders, to take over the Philippines, and before that, Hawaii: it should have been enough to possess America, and it was through listening to the old devil of greed that men went beyond what was the New World geographically and might be the New World spiritually.

What impresses me most about Edgar Lee Masters's long poem is its tone: it has the tone of a man testifying. Statements are made with the earnestness and purpose of one speaking before his fellows about things he would have them know and remember. The great figures of the nation's history are in it, and we feel the groundswell that is the anonymous people:

> These were the wills that wrecked the British troops.
> Dreamers, they took to the sword.
> They touched the keys of history as they sang
> The hymns of Cowper.

And Edgar Lee Masters shows us that the power of ideas is the real power in history:

> Truth, be it truth or only garbed as truth,
> Had more might than beauty, for at last
> Becoming destiny, it was beauty, too.

The land remains for those who will be faithful to it:

> It is the Radiant Land and Continent of the Blest
> Forever won and forever lost,
> And forever seen by the vision which thrilled Balboa
> Staring at the Pacific;
> And forever seen by the revelations of the soul
> Which came to John Keats through Homer,
> For both seas and land, the visions of the new day may be seen,
> And gold may be seen by Cortez and Pizarro and their sons,
> Who turn all Radiant Lands to gold, and starve therefor.
> But this New World is forever new to hands that keep it new.

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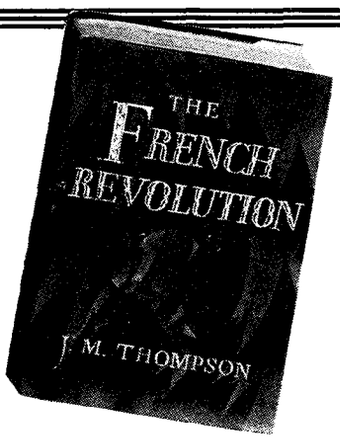

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"Poor and Often Lousy"

SIR: There is ample room for reasonable doubt whether the ancient writers, such as Chaucer, whose "lousy jogelour" is quoted by G. W. Barnes in the *SRL* of March 3, used the adjective in the sense in which it is now contemporaneously and extensively employed. That is, to stigmatize persons, places, things, or acts as possessing a degree of inferior quality, without any direct, or implied, entomological connotation. In all probability Chaucer's jogelour was literally lousy. For he wrote in a day when kings, princes and potentates, lights of the nobility and the aristocracy, gallant knights and even ladies fair, habitually, notoriously, and unashamedly were hosts to body lice. Jugglers, actors, peasants, all folk of lesser breeds and ranks, were in the same stead as their social betters. Benjamin Franklin palpably employed "lousy" in its insectile sense when in a letter to Sarah Bache, January 26, 1784, he expressed his wish that "the Bald Eagle had not been chosen as the Representative of our Country; he is a bird of bad moral Character; like those among men who live by Sharping and Robbing, he is generally poor and often lousy."

ROBERT HAMMOND MURRAY.
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

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The Shadow of Mars

A WORLD WITHIN A WAR. By Herbert Read. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1945. 44 *pp.* $2.

THE WINTER SEA. By Allen Tate. Cummington: The Cummington Press. 1944. 44 *pp.* $5.

ONLY THE YEARS. By Ruth Lechlitner. Prairie City: The Press of James A. Decker. 1945. 64 *pp.* $2.

POEMS. By A. M. Klein. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America. 1944. 82 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by ALFRED KREYMBORG

SINCE the advent of World War II, there has been a good deal of argument regarding the theme of Mars as a subject for poetry, a battle waged between those who feel that the muse must disregard the war or regard nothing else but the war. Since Americans usually run to extremes and even try to dictate what a man should be or not be, do or not do, write or not write, a great deal of nonsense has also been spoken. Meanwhile, the genuine poet answers all questions himself, so far as he is concerned, in the private and public operation of his genius or talents. It is a healthy sign that so much energy may still be discovered in poets old and new at the present hour, and in such varied degrees and forms. Since it is the business of the critic to play fair with books in hand and to submerge his personality in that of the beings reviewed, one attempts the difficult job in limited space of revealing at second hand what the reader could improve upon by reading at first hand. In short, each of the volumes examined here is worthy of being read not once but often, and for itself alone beyond comparison. At the same time, since each reflects the shadow of Mars, whether deliberately or not, and tries to escape or deflect, or to accept or scorn that bloody shape, these four volumes may be considered together, under the happy exigencies of a poetry market crowded as never before.

The art of the English poet, Herbert Read, has never received its full deserts in America, except among the coteries. "A World Within a War" is his first book of verse since "Poems 1914-1934" and, in its moving simplicity, reaches far beyond merely esthetic groups to companionship with humanity as a whole. Read has too fine a mind to rely on popular appeal, or to drop into facile or topical lines by way of illustrating the source of his deep emotion. Nonetheless, one can deduce, without overstressing the point, that the Spanish Civil War awakened in Read, as in liberals all over the earth, such lines as "The Heart Conscripted," closing with the stanza:

Lorca was killed, singing,
And Fox who was my friend.
The rhythm returns: the song
Which has no end.

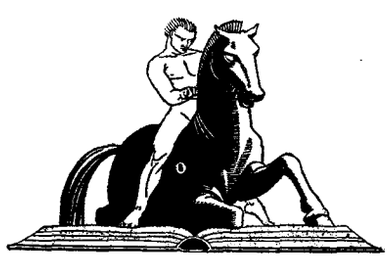
Nor will this World War round a true circle until it closes on Spain.

Throughout the volume, one finds the influence, not of Eliot, his old friend and colleague, but of the early Imagists. But Herbert Read has advanced beyond the chiselling of perfect cameos wrought in a private world. The cadences are broader and more native to human speech. He no longer adheres to the type of privacy which is fully as responsible for Armageddon as the war mongers themselves:

Belief without action
action without thought
the blind intervention
of years without design.

And he chants elsewhere that we must have faith "in Time which for the tyrant is a talisman of dread."

Allen Tate, a battleground in himself since the days of the Fugitives, comes to the poetic front with a small book, "The Winter Sea," each of whose eight numbers reveals the hand of an artist. Completely scornful of the factual or commonplace, the bellicose Southerner relies on imagination hard and intense, yet never brittle. While



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he has acknowledged his indebtedness to seventeenth century metaphysicals, and to Dante in the medieval past, and to Yeats and Hart Crane in our recent past, and while he abjures any further tribute to Eliot and dubs his neophytes "Spirits grown Eliotic, now patriotic are," Tate is decidedly original and his brilliant scholarship nourishes rather than hampers his poetry. One feels that each of these poems—and how varied their lyrical vein—was subjected to the harshest self-criticism in the interests of a tenacious objectivity. Mars enters again, but always as a part of the general scheme, and thoroughly derided except for the beautiful "Ode to Our Young Pro-Consuls of the Air." A sharply etched "Eclogue of the Liberal and the Poet," purposely echoing Virgil in the opening line, grows cynical and abusive, running a gamut of tragically witty rhymes on the syllable, "hope," ending on "rope." Nor can our old Christianity turn back to that faith, not even on Christmas Eve and its "mummy Christ." A "False Nightmare," which begins like a satire on Whitman contradicting himself, takes a *volte face* by satirizing our own "Sweet-rotting grace. Ungracefully doting Great-aunts hanged in lace we are." "Seasons Of The Soul," with its refrain on the syllable "jaws," is a perfectly cadenced ballad communicating the emptiness of a former house.

"Only the Years," Ruth Lechlitner's selected poems, 1938-1944, might be called the diary of a woman and her family in a country house supposedly isolated. But even in 1938, the date of the first entries, Nature reminds

Fraser Young's Literary Crypt: No. 92

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer to No. 92 will be found in the next issue.

XAGKXKBL KB F BLFCC

EMFBB DKZCHJKZXZ POFP

ZQZGPRFCCA EMZFSB FGH

SKCCB POZ XFGGVGZZM.

—OZGMA FCHMKXO

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us of "the hot spoor on the crushed leaf marking the course that terror has taken." Or as Oscar Wilde claimed Nature imitates art. In fairly steady iambics, with many subtle variations, the poet consistently draws parallels between the plant-animal world and the human world, and rarely forces the symbolism. Especially poignant are the references to the child in the house, facing the coming night: "Starlight, starbright . . ." To a friend in the city who envies country people the answer is:

These hills are not a wall against our sight
Nor is this blown grass tall enough to hide
The dangers of our time from us. We hear more than thunder
Shaking green boughs; see more than blade-sharp wind
Cut the standing grain in moonlight.

In the midst of her diary, Miss Lechlitner turns on intellectuals who embrace the escapist mood, and writes in a forthright measure:

More dangerous than the crippling sky,
Than the death-riders to the heart
And the heart's dream, are those who lie
Self-saved, self-laurelled and apart.

And she concludes on the buoyant note that

Change must be served even as love is served:
Nor feared *or* mocked nor bound, but in our time defended.

A. M. Klein, the Canadian poet who recently issued "The Hitleriad" with New Directions, has another volume called "Poems" which deals with the longest war in history, the war against the Jews. Opening with a book of XXXVI Psalms based on the life of Abraham, and closing with a ballad in quasi-Spenserian stanzas on the pilgrimage of a medieval troubadour in search of the lost Zion, Klein informs the present with the past and the past with the future. This dynamic tour de force lapses at times into careless workmanship or facile expression but is on the whole robust, affecting, and effective.

Alfred Kreymborg, well-known American poet, will soon have his "Selected Poems" published.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 573)

H. KOHN:

THE IDEA OF NATIONALISM

Once nationalism increased individual liberty and happiness; now it undermines them. . . . Once nationality was a great force of life, spurring on the evolution of mankind; now it may become a dead weight upon the march of humanity.

Two Powerful Negro Poets

RENDEZVOUS WITH AMERICA. By Melvin B. Tolson. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1944 121 *pp.* $2.

FREEDOM'S PLOW. By Langston Hughes. New York: Musette Publishers. 1943. (*Pamphlet*) 16 *pp.* 15c.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

MR. TOLSON'S book is remarkable. His poem "Dark Symphony," included here, won the National Poetry Contest conducted in connection with the American Negro Exposition in Chicago, and was subsequently published in *The Atlantic.* The title-poem of this volume originally appeared in the magazine *Common Ground* which is doing such fine work to humanize and unify this country. Mr. Tolson teaches English Literature and directs Drama and Speech at Wiley College, Marshall, Texas. He is not only an exemplar of the finest qualities of his race, but a poet of powerful rhythm and original language. You have only to begin that remarkable poem, "The Bard of Addis Ababa":

Out of the green glooms of Dambassa
Trots the massive yellow dog,
His prowlike jaws, his forehead
Scarred like an axman's log,
His growls presaging a menace
Like a fog-horn in a fog.

Sometimes Mr. Tolson uses words more for the love of their sound than for their aptitude. But he surprises with insight. Hear him on the Poet:

A freebooter of lands and seas,
He plunders the dialects of the marketplace,
Thieves lexicons of crown jewel discoveries,
Pillages the symbols and meccas of the race:
Of thefts the poet's magic leaves no trace.

An Ishmaelite,
He breaks the icons of the Old and New,
Devours your privacy like a parasite,
Parades the skeletons closeted with God and you:
The poet's lien exempts the Many nor the Few.

Mr. Tolman needs to be more his own editor, but his work is exciting and he has the insurrection in him of the real poet. I have long thought that

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the Negro has a special delight in the sound, shape, and color of words that most white people lack. In the past their caress upon language, whose meaning was only partially understood, may have been food for humor. There is a great deal more to it than that. They furbish and freshen words, the best of them, whether artlessly or, as here, with art; they polish them till the poetry glows from them. The established Negro poet, Langston Hughes, can do that too. But "Freedom's Plow," reprinted this year, is more good rhetoric, rhetoric in a good cause. Paul Muni read this poem over the Blue Network a year ago last March. It has stirring rhythm. It must be deeply moving, to all who really care about this country, to have one of its Negro citizens stand up and say:

The people often hold
Great thoughts in their deepest hearts
And sometimes only blunderingly express them,
Haltingly and stumbling say them . . .
The people do not always understand each other.
But there is, somewhere there,
Always the *trying* to understand,
And the *trying* to say,
"You are a man. Together we are building our land."

Une Danse Intérieure

POEMES D'ICI ET DE LA-BAS. By André Spire. New York: The Dryden Press. 1944. 160 *pp.* $3.50.

Reviewed by JEREMY INGALLS

THIS volume brings under American imprint the original French texts of eighty-five poems from André Spire's previous collections, published in France since the beginning of the century, with seventeen poems written during four years of residence in the United States. Although a few of these poems have appeared, from time to time, in English translation, no translation has been remarkably successful. Just as Spire has been a student of all investigations into the accentual qualities of French verse and has himself made contribution to the scholarship of the subject, so, in his practice of French verse, he has developed through a lifetime of energetic writing a style not only intricately contrapuntal in movement but also highly chromatic in sound, in shading, off-rhyme, consonance, assonance.

One of André Spire's favorite phrases, the *sens-son,* like *danse intérieure,* gives a clue to the remarkable energy which engines his verse. He explodes in acrid satire, "La Victoire en Chantant," pricking the flatulent vanity of the same breed of merchants who heard his mocking voice twenty years ago in "Fournisseurs." He composes a lullaby for his delightful daughter, Marie Brunette. He turns over, in suavest turning of gear with gear, the nervous vitality of sensuous and civilized man, as in the poems under the section titles, "Allons Vieux Coeur" and "Pars Courageusement." And every page speaks essential poetry, the *sens-son,* the visible world made audible.

The four divisions of this volume sum up those aspects of experience to which Spire has directed his forceful and sensuous language. His work records the civilized man, alternating ironies and despairs "Pendant la Bataille," rehearsing the victories and defeats of personal relationships against betrayals the more ugly because they are the treacheries of the petty against the great-hearted, the cabals of wizened hearts against the hearts alive and growing. The final section, "Toi Qui Es Là!," extends the awareness of the man of sensibility to the ultimate question which—however much, in theological terms, it may tempt him to satire—requires of the sensitive whole man a dynamic reverence.

Valiant enjoyment of the full life of the soul and the senses, the life of the man free because he is aware, conscious of the complexity of personality, controlling and redeeming his irresponsibilities and shames by the absolution of personal devotion and the recreation of the world in symbol, this vivacity, irony, and sympathy empower the spirit of André Spire, loving sun and wind and the sound of motion. We might have expected in this book only the elegiac mood, poems *ici,* impatient or dolorous, the broken life of a man in his seventies exiled and perforce building a new career on strange soil. The wonder of Spire, as the forthright speaker for civilized values, with a long history of speaking for the good causes, is that the poems *ici* have lost none of the sun-driven energy. The *vieux coeur* of this septuagenarian can still challenge his enemy (*Radio-Vichy; Zone occupée; A la Marseillaise*), still speak "le langage sincère d'égaux." His poems written in this country, as his poems *là-bas,* are the challenges of the man who has not retired, addressing "Compagnons de mes élans," actively aware of the terror, valor, and strength of this time.

To be published in June by Knopf will be Jeremy Ingalls's extraordinary long poem, "The Thunder-Saga of Tahl." She has just been awarded a scholarship by the Chinese Government to do graduate work in Chinese at the University of Chicago.

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Competence

LETTER HOME. By George Abbe. Hartford: Press of Finlay Brothers. 1944. 63 *pp.* $1.50.

Reviewed by SALLY HENDERSON

GEORGE ABBE, in his Foreword to his new collection of poems, writes:

> These poems represent what took place in me as I lived among the men in the Army. I hope, in some small way, that they reflect what many others feel and remember—the bedrock realities of life discovered. I hope I describe the new awareness of the spirit they are finding—the new closeness of God—close, not so much to what they go through, but to what they have left behind—a new spiritual awareness, the most basic and vital thing of all, which may yet flower into a new religious renaissance of our century.

I wish these poems had said that, in their own way, without benefit of Foreword. I wish that the poet's evident deep personal emotion, the intensity of his own spiritual awareness, had pervaded his expression. But somehow it has been filtered, diluted.

Looking on the winter's desolation, the poet says:

I thought: from ugliness like this
The sapling springs.
So shall we find God bursting from
Our sufferings.

This is no new awareness of life's and the spirit's realities; it is least of all a new way of interpreting them. This is not a re-creating of poetic stimulus, it is just talking about it, and in a way which carries over none of the passion and beauty of the emotional experience. This perfectly competent but quite undistinguished utterance has none of that magic supercharge which is poetry. It is almost as if Mr. Abbe found the voice of the quickened heart too loud and harsh and sought to make it calm and mannerly, to paraphrase its vivid living speech into gentle assurances and the repeating of familiar truths.

Much as I respect the poet's sincerity of intent I could not find myself deeply moved by these poems. There are many lovely lines and felicitous turns of phrase, and the nature poems particularly have the charm of quiet accurate observation. Mr. Abbe has considerable talent, but he has not yet attained that level of high individuality and true distinction of thought and expression which would make his poems memorable. There was nothing in the book that brought me bolt upright in my chair with that instant recognition of poetic impact, the feeling that something had been said which had never been said before.

JERICHO UNCUT

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Living Poet, Deadly Critic

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS: A STUDY OF POETIC IDIOSYNCRASY IN RELATION TO POETIC TRADITION. By W. H. Gardner. London: Secker & Warburg. 1944. *Vol. I.* 281 *pp.*

Reviewed by HORACE GREGORY

THE book before me is the first volume of an important work, and because it is a work of extraordinary value to readers of poetry, those circumstances which will prevent it being read by the general public are also matters of true concern. The first of these is the price—twenty-five shillings, roughly, six dollars and twenty-five cents in United States currency—which a wartime economy in Great Britain has imposed upon many books of more than transient value, and I fear, is an economy which will be emulated over here. The war has accented a tendency on the part of British and American publishers alike to emulate the standards of Hollywood, to feed the public with great quantities of cheaply written fiction and non-fiction at low prices, and then to insist blandly that "that's the stuff the public wants."

The second circumstance which obscures the merits of W. H. Gardner's book—and this is a far more serious matter than the first—is the manner in which he has presented his commentary on Hopkins's poetry to the world. I feel that Mr. Gardner has addressed himself solely to that small company of readers, including myself, who have become proficient in the painful, almost self-flagitious, art of reading neo-scholastic essays on poetry in the pages of *The Kenyon Review,* and its far more lively British contemporary, *Scrutiny.* I feel half-ashamed of the painful exercise to which, I lend my eyes and ears, but I also feel (and this more strongly than any objection that could be raised to an otherwise unnatural habit) a duty to keep well-informed on the subject of poetry. Like many well-intentioned contemporary critics of poetry, Mr. Gardner has carried a dull, neo-scholastic, shop-talking, quasi-scientific, quasi-philosophic method to the forefront of his book. The laboratory-research method of analyzing and testing the values of poetry has its place, and that place is in the notes which are taken before the book is written; and the more important findings in their raw condition may be presented (quite as though they were "facts" in presenting evidence) in the book's appendices. Beyond the first two chapters of his book, Mr. Gardner's arrangement of the contents seems arbitrary, and indeed, it would have been wiser for him to have withheld the discussion of Hopkins's critics and reviewers, as well as the influence of Hopkins's poetry on contemporary writers for a position in the final pages of his second and unpublished volume.

My objection to the manner in which Mr. Gardner has presented Hopkins's poetry is perhaps a moral one. The value of Hopkins's poetry has reached beyond the concern of a small and isolated group of readers, and as Gerard Hopkins (the poet's nephew) observes in his excellent foreword to Mr. Gardner's book "Hopkins the poet deserves to be more than the mere starting-point for subjective reverie"; more than that, the continuing editions of his poetry deserve to be read in the light of Mr. Gardner's discoveries, and if they are not, a measurable share of the blame rests upon the neo-scholastic method that Mr. Gardner has employed. In respect to the details of research in reading Hopkins's poetry, his note-books, and his letters, Mr. Gardner has discharged his duties with more honor and a finer intelligence than any living commentator on or critic of Hopkins's prose and verse, but there his responsibility to his subject seems to have stopped short; the other half of Mr. Gardner's responsibility seems to have been neglected, and that is, without "talking-down" to his potential readers, the art of making what he has to say attractive and intelligible to the mature public outside the walls of a college or a university.

The mere sight of so much scholastic jargon on the printed page (which had been ridiculed by Alexander Pope over a century and a half ago in his "Dunciad") has created and still creates a charge of "unintelligibility" against all that has inspired and is a living force in the best of contemporary poetry.

What lies behind the awkward and forbidding externals of Mr. Gardner's book is of great, and I believe, enduring value. The burden of his argument is that first of all we cannot separate Hopkins, the "priest," from Hopkins, the "poet," that the poems, beginning with "The Wreck of the Deutschland," a major devotional poem, which can be compared to Christopher Smart's "Song to David," derived the larger part of their inspiration from the teachings of Duns Scotus. Mr. Gardner with reasonable conclusiveness also shows Hopkins's debt, particularly in his sonnets, to Milton, and the result of Mr. Gardner's excellently discerned observations is to

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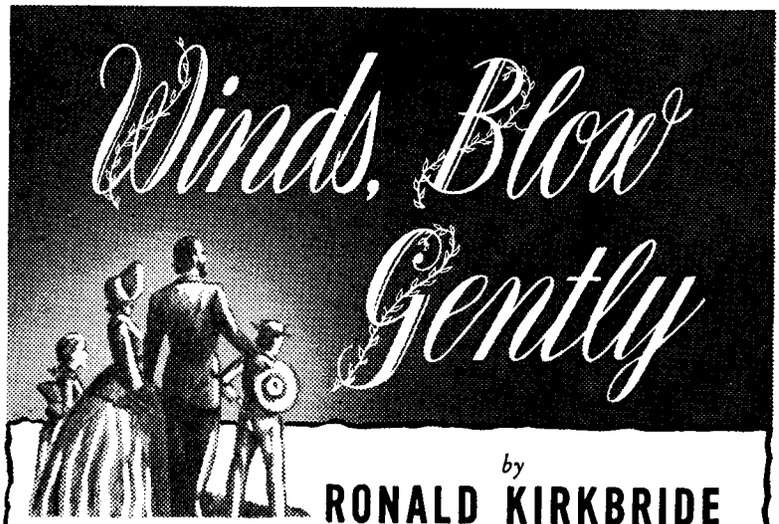
place Hopkins's poetry where it belongs, well within the traditional framework of English verse. The moment one grasps the traditional aspect of Hopkins's poetry, all the superficial aspects of its so-called "obscurity" tend to drop away—and that is why Mr. Gardner's book is a work of primary importance to all who have enjoyed the discovery of Hopkins's poetry in popular anthologies. No one has written of "sprung rhythm" with more discernment and common sense than Mr. Gardner has, and my only regret is that his formidable approach to the subject stands in the way of its being presented to those who still regard it as among the "mysteries" of Hopkins's genius.

Certain general conclusions regarding Hopkins's poetry are reinforced by the publication of Mr. Gardner's book. Hopkins's radical temper permeated everything he did and wrote: his poetry, the literary criticism contained within his letters and his notebooks, his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church, his definition of "inscape" and "instress" were of one piece. He would have agreed, I believe, with an observation that Mr. Gardner makes concerning "The Wreck of the Deutschland," "it is not what a poem *says* that matters, but what it *is*," which is a radical distinction that makes life and poetry a single being, and this achievement is always one of rare accomplishment.

The time has come to drop the critic's quarrel that has existed between those who admire Hopkins and those who pay respects to his editor and Poet-Laureate, Robert Bridges; even Bridges's dislike of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" seems now to have sharpened Hopkins's poetic wit, to have intensified, if anything, his determination "to go his own way," deeply moved by those emotions that were released only by his two-fold devotion to his poetry and to his Church. Rather than speculate as to what Hopkins would have written had he lived in a time other than in Victoria's reign, or to regret that all his poetry is contained within a small volume of scarcely more than a hundred and fifty pages we should accept all of the poems written from 1876, that is from "The Deutschland" onward, to 1889, the year of Hopkins's death, as the creations of a poet whose freedom of Will gained its right to speak in an individual voice from the teachings of Scotus, and who practised his art with a radical devotion to the combined traditions of dramatic and lyrical English verse. As to Hopkins's "timelessness," his conscious use of words of Anglo-Saxon derivation, his debts to Milton and to Shakespeare and to Greek prosody as well as the speech of his own day, as to his influence upon the "future" which arrived when Robert Bridges published "Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins" in 1918, Pablo Picasso, another highly individual and yet traditional artist, should be quoted:

> If a work of art cannot live always in the present it must not be considered at all . . . the ideas of people change and with them modes of expression. When I hear people speak of the evolution of an artist, it seems to me that they are considering him standing between two mirrors that face each other and reproduce his image an infinite number of times, and that they contemplate the successive images of one mirror as his past, and the images of the other mirror as his future, while his real image is taken as his present. They do not consider that they are all the same images in different planes.

As Picasso spoke of his own painting, so it is with Hopkins's poetry. The particular, the peculiar vision with its "instress" and "inscape" of physical being, the very detail of objects seen and music heard, and these offered in service to his two vocations, "priest" and "poet" are "the same images," the marks of genius that Hopkins left in manuscript in Robert Bridges's hands. And it seems to me that after W. H. Gardner's second and concluding volume on Gerard Manley Hopkins has appeared, it will be refreshing to remember Hopkins's poems for themselves, and to test their value within sight of Picasso's statement.



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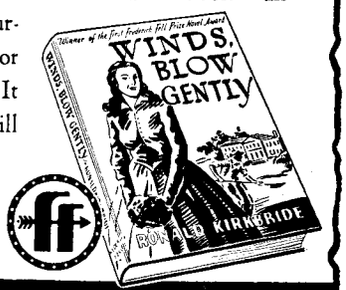

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POETRY FOR THE MICROPHONE

(*Continued from page* 20)

medium. We are not aware of its possibilities. We do not write *for it.*

It was Coleridge who defined poetry as "the best words in their best order." That definition fits happily into this article: poets never had a greater challenge than they have in radio to prove their ability to choose the right word, that and no other. And if you, reading these lines now, are a poet, then be prepared to discover the ego-deflating reality that more than one poem of yours, poems you yourself value highly, are quite non-understandable or very empty when read on the air. The radio may reveal to you as it has to this writer that a poem while it may look very attractive typographically on a typewritten or printed page has no intrinsic worth when it has to stand on uttered syllables alone. You see, in radio it is not so important what the beautiful blonde wears before the mike: it is what she says that counts, and if her words are without meaning, then there's nothing for her but Hollywood,—or for your poem but the wastebasket.

The question undoubtedly is in your minds: to be good what is it that radio poetry must have? Read MacLeish, particularly his plays written especially for radio, or read Benét's "Listen to the People," and you will quickly find it: it's conversation; it's people talking *with* one another, using words easy to say, easy to listen to, easy to understand.—MacLeish made the states of these United States talk with one another about Hitler in "The States Talking."—Not that every word in the poem is easy to say, or easy to understand when read aloud; that would be asking too much, but that is the objective; it is the thing to keep in mind when working up a poem of your own for radio, selecting one for radio presentation, or producing a program of poetry.

As an experiment, select, say, six or eight short poems you like. Try them out before the microphone in an audition. Can the listener understand what the poem is about? If he cannot, be kind to other listeners and the muse and substitute something that is understandable. Some one properly may raise the question: do you mean to say that a poem can be good, and still be unsuitable for the air lanes? I mean exactly that. If it is too compact, too involved, too precieuse, too "special," do not disturb it in its proper abiding place: the book that contains it.

Let us remember in writing poetry for radio use that we do not speak in rhyme, but we can and often do speak musically, speak in rhythm, whether we realize it or not. For proof, listen to the conversation of people, conversation in which you have no part, in which your presence is unseen, or to conversation in a language you do not understand. Note the flow and ebb of it, the musical hum, the rhythm that may arise even from a table of female bridge players (if sufficiently remote).

We speak normally with recurring rhythm, that may become cadenced loveliness, the lovelier for its irregularity, the unexpectedness of its inflections, its grace notes, its full stops.

To prove to yourself whether you have written poetry, or whether the example before you is poetry, type it out on your typewriter in full lines after lines across the page. See how inconsequential, perhaps even obnoxious, your pet end-of-line rhyming words become, even to distortion of your thought, or the straining of it into opacity.

Or take a free verse poem poised on a page in visual ecstacy, at least to the writer. When your typewriter stretches your line taut across the page, one line of your poem after another, the test may shatter the "poem" for it removes the mechanical props, and the debris that is left may be merely poor prose, or a welter of words.

Further, because the obvious is so frequently overlooked, let us always keep in mind that capital letters, italicized words, paragraphical divisions, and punctuation marks (those absurd things so carefully hidden on hard-to-get-at typewriter keys), all the debris that makes up the mechanics of writing, do NOT go on the air.

Radio, which is the spoken word, which is the test of poetry (that is, reading it aloud), knocks the visual props from under mechanical verse. It makes poetry depend on its inherent worth, the music inside the lines, or that plays over them like lightning along a pasture fence, lines that fit the speaking voice, that do not cause choking in the utterance, that are good to listen to, comfortable to say.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. "Tobermory," by Saki. 2. "Alice in Wonderland," by Lewis Carroll. 3. "Silas Marner," by George Eliot. 4. "Vanity Fair," by William Thackeray. 5. "Cinderella," by Charles Perrault. 6. "Lochinvar," by Sir Walter Scott. 7. "A Christmas Carol," by Charles Dickens. 8. "The Masque of the Red Death," by Edgar Allan Poe. 9. "Gone with the Wind," by Margaret Mitchell. 10. "You Can't Take It with You," by Kaufman and Hart.

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Francis Carlin, 1883-1945

ON Monday, March 12, *The New York Times* carried a long obituary of the poet, Francis Carlin, who in the words of its subhead "sought seclusion in '23 after his first success." He died at the age of sixty-two, and thereby one of the truly distinguished poets of our time passed from among us. His baptismal name was James Francis Carlin MacDonnell "but he always wrote under the name Francis Carlin, in honor of his grandfather, a weaver in County Tyrone." Some years ago he dropped out of sight to devote himself to a study of the structure of the Bible; it was to be his real life's work.

The best comment we could have had would have been from T. A. Daly, the Irish-American poet, of the *Evening Bulletin* in Philadelphia, who was one of the first to discover Francis Carlin's fine talent. Unfortunately time precluded, after we had asked Christopher Morley for some comment. Mr. Morley replied as follows:

> I have been hunting, without success, for a remarkably beautiful "Letter to an Unborn Child" which he sent me, back in 1923; and which —I *think*—I once printed, but without any identifications as to authorship or dedicatee—in the older days of the *SRL* Bowling Green. One of my clearest memories of Francis was a time we were sitting in the back room of Dewey's wineshop on Fulton Street—in prohib days, when one could only buy wine if it was pretended to be a tonic, medicated with pepsin; you remember, that stuff from Egg Harbor, N. J.—and I asked him if he ever wrote any prose. No, he said. Poetry is what comes to you; but in prose you've got to know what you're doing." We used to love to chaff him about having the ideal job for a poet, when he was floor-walker in the rug dept at Macy's. Because, as you know, at five p. m. they roll up all the rugs, bedding etc into great soft piles of couchant luxury. And while the store gradually grew quiet Francie would repose himself supine on those masses of horizontal ease, and think over whatever verses might be in his mind. I tried hard in 1939, when he was reported in straits, to be of use to him; but his determination was strong and I don't remember that he ever replied to the attempts. He was off the beam of the world's dazzling and cruel brightness; in that half-world of shadow I think he was truly happy. I am sure he rests well; better than most.

Favorite poems of his are "The Newsmonger," "The Calf-boy," "The Berry-Blossom," "The Yellow Stirabout," "The Symbolists," "The Two Nests," etc. With Yeats and Colum and Stephens and Francis Ledwidge, Carlin was a true poet of Ireland. He did not care about fame.

W. R. B.

PERSONALS

ADVERTISEMENTS will be accepted in this column for things wanted or unwanted; personal services to let or required; literary or publishing offers not easily classified elsewhere; miscellaneous items appealing to a special and intelligent clientèle; jobs wanted, houses or camps for rent, tutoring, traveling companions, ideas for sale; communications of a decorous nature, expressions of opinion (limited to fifty lines). All advertisements must be consonant with the purpose and character of The Saturday Review. Ads of a strictly personal nature are limited to an exchange of correspondence, thus also enabling an exchange of reference. Rates: 10 cents per word including signature. Count two additional words for Box and Number. Payment in full must be received ten days in advance of publication. We forward all mail received in answer to box numbers. Address Personal Dept., Saturday Review, 25 West 45th Street, New York 19, N. Y.

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PERSONALS

(*Continued from page* 41)

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The Crostics Club

By Elizabeth S. Kingsley

IF occasionally a selection from your letter appears long after it is written, the delay is often caused by my stupidity to calculate the length of this column. I file your letter as "used," but it really has been omitted by the Editors. In limited living quarters like mine things get tucked away so compactly that a thorough system of filing to avoid such contingencies I haven't as yet worked out. Thus last October this interesting angle to the value of DCs came from Julia Carpenter, Boston: "I am hard of hearing and studied lip-reading last summer. As I do the puzzles largely from intuition, deduction, and from a subconscious vocabulary, I found the lip-reading easier from the experience with puzzles and almost as much fun."

Mrs. S. H. Parker, Hadley, Mass., furnishes us with still another use for DCs, for they "always keep a DC Series on the table at meals to prevent fast eating. It's so easy to put down or take up in case of interruptions." Mrs. Parker's Meadow View Farm letterhead makes one's mouth water for celery and asparagus.

Corporal Sam Morford, stationed as a psychology expert at Langley Field, Va., honored me with a luncheon date from his three days of precious leave. Knowing that he specialized, too, in play-writing and acting, having won a prize recently for a one-act Army play, and painted surrealist canvases to boot, I was truly afraid to meet his modern erudition; but we managed most pleasantly. In discussing radio tastes, when he recounted how an afternoon on his barracks' cot with Joyce's "Ulysses" was rudely interjected with strains of jazz from one side, of crooning from another, and of a soapbox drama from the third, I reflected that perhaps his buddies planned better than they knew! Corp. Morford knew Harry Irvine, a New Yorker now, a DCer who had recently lunched with me, full of diverse experiences in an acting career in England and America, from a childhood in Anglo-India. And the Corporal's mother had lived next door to the Will Irwins with whom I had spent a few happy hours a few weeks ago in their ample Greenwich Village home. Such a wholesome couple are Will and Inez Haynes Irwin! Mrs. Helen Baker, Glens Falls, N. Y., and her sister, Mrs. Burlingame, were other hostesses here on their yearly jaunt to New York City.

You escaped a beautiful word for a recent DC, *Kedushshah*—3 h's! Owing to its specific ritualistic meaning I relented in time. Those Hebrew and Hindu religious and philosophical terms are certainly tempting.

Our octogenarian genealogist, John Cox, Jr., N. Y., signs himself "Your patient digger," in a query as to whether the office cat hadn't been muddling affairs again, but I think he was the culprit this time.

MARCH 24, 1945

DOUBLE-CROSTICS: No. 574

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).

The solution of last week's *Double Crostic* will be found on page 35 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. American poet, in residence at Antioch College (1875-).
B. At random (Comp.)
C. American statesman, Sec'y of State 1895-97 (1835-1917).
D. Young pilgrim who accompanied Christiana to Zion ("Pilgrim's Progress").
E. Fine silky asbestos (Mineral.)
F. An old fogy (Comp.)
G. Drink of ale spiced, or mixed with spirits (2 wds.)
H. Russian sculptor of portrait statues (1843-1902).
I. Pertaining to a kind of hilarotragedy, named for its inventor (300 B.C.)
J. A plover of Europe and Asia, once of England (*Eudromias morinellus*).
K. Colombian plant allied to guarana, whose leaves and bark contain caffeine.
L. Stylish, smart (Brit. slang).
M. Poet known as the "Ettrick Shepherd."
N. A Central American tree; the oil from its seeds.
O. English mechanical engineer and inventor (1803-87; screw-thread).
P. Novel by Frank Norris (with "The").
Q. Hear! Attend! (Old court cry).
R. To be very precise in making distinctions, etc. (Colloq.; 3 wds.)
S. Members of a light cavalry regiment with special weapons for which it is named.
T. Having no jaws.
U. Recent historic reply by American commander of a beleaguered garrison to German request to surrender.
V. English sculptor (1888-).
W. Members of a Negro tribe of the Slave Coast, Africa (Sudanese).
X. That part of Paris on the left bank of the Seine (Fr.; 2 wds.)
Y. Disorder of the eye causing squinting (Med.)

WORDS

146 39 170 81 101 154 55 119
97 133 110 141 74 48 165 115 10 54
47 102 60 43 62
27 90 127 1 173
26 109 89 174 114 3 140 76 44
50 151 2 70 159 99 13 58 56 149 142 40 135
177 108 14 7 112 171
33 123 160 52 67 32 87 30 164 131
46 17 155 166 31 172 125 134 116 41
167 79 37 136 180 72 143 65
145 63 158 129 75
120 103 132 45 163
85 22 126 105
178 144 15 84
93 42 24 11 20 86 153 16 111
71 118 176 78 6 152 91
21 4 148 57
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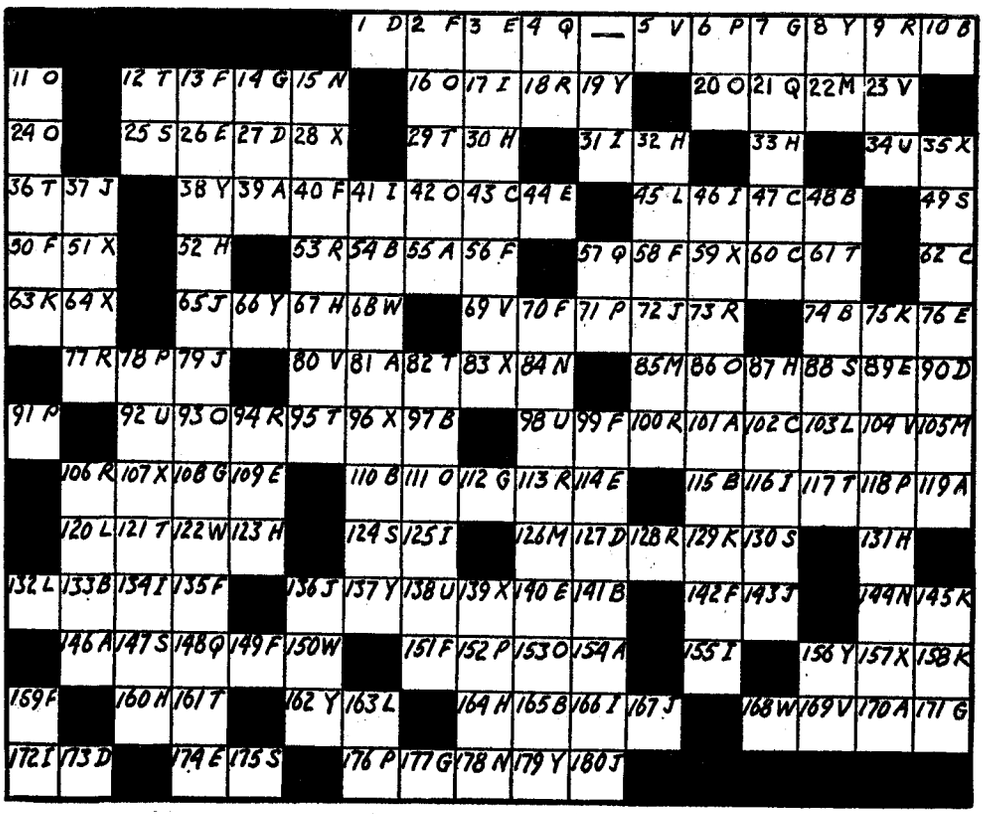

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